شرح مبادئ التوحيد

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF TAWHEED

(ISLAMIC MONOTHEISM)

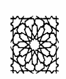
Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

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THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE, ALL-MERCIFUL



THE FUNDAMENTALS OF *TAWḤEED*

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Publisher's Note

All praise and thanks are due to Allah alone, the One, the All-High and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His messengers and prophets, his family, Companions and all those who follow in his footsteps till the end of time.

Tawhid, the oneness of God, is the core of the Islamic faith. Mankind, created as the vicegerent of God, is assigned the duty of implementing this concept on earth in every walk of life since the days of the first man, Adam.

Satan is the eternal and arch enemy of mankind. He vowed that he will spare no effort to distract man from the guided path. He works hard to get man involved in innovations and heresies if paganism or atheism fails to attract attention. Dr. Philips has pointed out the inroads creeping into the creed very efficiently and clarified the concept of *Tawhid* in his book away from deviant views.

Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, a devoted *da'iyah* who graduated from the Islamic University of Madinah, wrote a number of books on Islam in English. In this book he discusses the issue of *Tawhid* in an easy-to-understand language and style. It caters to the needs of all, especially the general readers, and goes a long way towards making the issue wholly understood.

The book, *al-Hamdulillah*, has been well received by readers everywhere. This edition is the revised and improved version by the author.

May Allah bless the efforts of the author and all those associated with the production of this book.

Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Muhsin al-Tuwaijri

General Manager,
International Islamic Publishing House, IIPH
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Foreword

It is common knowledge that *Tawḥīd* is the basis of the religion of Islam and that it is most precisely expressed in the formula, "*Lā ilāha illallāh*" (There is no god but Allah), which states that there is only one true God and that He alone deserves to be worshipped. This seemingly simple formula forms the dividing line between *Eemān* (true belief in God) and *Kufr* (disbelief), according to the tenets of Islam. Because of this principle of *Tawḥīd,* the Islamic belief in God is considered to be unitarian and Islam is counted among the world's monotheistic religions along with Judaism and Christianity. Yet, according to the Islamic unitarian concept (*Tawḥīd*), Christianity is classified as polytheism and Judaism is considered a subtle form of idolatry.

Thus, the principle of *Tawḥīd* is profound and needs further clarification even among Muslims. This point is vividly illustrated by the fact that some Muslims like Ibn 'Arabi[1] understood *Tawḥīd* to mean that Allah is all and all is Allah; that there is only one existence, which is Allah. Yet, such beliefs are classified by

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[1] Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Arabi was born in Spain in the year 1165 CE and died in Damascus in the year 1240 CE. He claimed to possess inner light and knowledge of Allah's greatest name and referred to himself as the seal of the sainthood which he implied was a status higher than prophethood. In the centuries following his death, his followers elevated him to the status of saint, and gave him the title of *ash-Shaykh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Master), but the majority of Muslim legal scholars considered him a heretic. His principle works are *al-Futūhāt al-Makkīyah* and *Fusūs al-Ḥikim*, (H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1953, Pp. 146-7).

mainstream Islam as pantheism and, as such, *Kufr.* Other Muslims such as the *Mu'tazilah*[2] felt that *Tawḥīd* consisted of stripping Allah of all His attributes and asserting that He is present everywhere and in everything. Yet, these ideas were also rejected by orthodox Islam and considered heretical. In fact, almost all of the various heretical sects which broke off from the main body of Islam, from the Prophet's time till today, all began their divergence from the point of *Tawḥīd.* All of those who worked for the destruction of Islam and the misguidance of its followers have attempted to neutralize the principle of *Tawḥīd,* because it represents the very essence of the divine message of Islam brought by all the prophets. They have introduced concepts about Allah totally alien to Islam; concepts designed to take man away from the worship of Allah alone. Once people accept these pagan philosophies about God, they become easily susceptible to a multitude of other deviant ideas all of which eventually lead those who accept them to the worship of created things under the guise of the true worship of God.

The Prophet (ﷺ) himself, vividly warned Muslims to beware of such deviations as had befallen the nations before them. He encouraged them to stick closely to the path which he had tread. One day as he sat with his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), he drew a straight line in the dirt. He then drew a series of lines branching off from either side of it. When the Companions asked him what it meant, he pointed to the branches and told them that they represented the various paths of misguidance in this life. He went on to say that at the head of each

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[2] A rationalist philosophical school founded in the Umayyad period (i.e. early 8th century CE) by Wāsil ibn 'Aṭā and 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd. It gained sway over the 'Abbāsid state for over a hundred years and continued to influence Islamic thought until the 12th century (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Pp. 421-6).

path sat a devil inviting people to it. After that, he pointed to the straight line in the middle and told them that it represented the path of Allah. When the Companions asked for further clarification, he told them that it was his path and he recited the following verse:

﴿وَأَنَّ هَٰذَا صِرَٰطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَٱتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا۟ ٱلسُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦ ... ﴿١٥٣﴾﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١٥٣)

"*This is my path leading straight, so follow it. And do not follow the other paths, or else you will be separated from His [Allah's] path...*" (Qur'an 6: 153)[3]

It is therefore of the utmost importance that *Tawḥīd* be clearly understood in the way it was taught by the Prophet (ﷺ) and understood by his Companions, or else one could easily end up on one of the many deviant paths while claiming *Tawḥīd,* praying, paying Zakah,[4] fasting and making Ḥajj. Allah, Most Wise, has pointed to this phenomenon when He said in the Qur'an,

﴿وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُم بِٱللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُم مُّشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾﴾

(سورة يوسف: ١٠٦)

"*Most of them claim to believe in Allah, but they really commit shirk.*" (Qur'an 12: 106)

However, when an English reader compares the large number of books written in English on *ṣalāḥ*, zakah, *ṣawm* (fasting) and ḥajj or on Islamic economics and politics to the one

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[3] Reported by Ibn Mas'ūd and collected by an-Nasā'i, Aḥmad and ad-Dārimi. Authenticated by al-Albāni in *Kitāb as-Sunnah*, vol. 1, p. 13, no. 17.

[4] Annual compulsory charity.

or two pamphlets and booklets written on *Tawḥīd,* he or she could only conclude that *Tawḥīd* is of little significance in Islam. This assumption is further strengthened when one reads even that most comprehensive books on Islam, wherein, *Tawḥīd* is usually discussed in about half a page while the rest of the book is devoted to an elaboration of the other pillars of Islam. Yet, *Tawḥīd* is the very foundation of Islam on which all the other pillars and principles depend. If one's *Tawḥīd* is not sound, the rest of one's Islam becomes, in effect, a series of pagan rituals. Without a doubt, much more needs to be translated and written in the field of *Tawḥīd* to fill the void and correct mistaken beliefs rampant among Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The present work represents a humble attempt to provide English speaking readers with a basic analysis of the major areas of the Islamic Science of *Tawḥīd.* Although this book is based on the approach used in classical Arabic texts on the science of *Tawḥīd* such as *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah,*[5] I have deliberately avoided the presentation of the theological issues found in classical works that have little or no relevance to modern English readers.

The majority of the material for this book was gathered from *Tawḥīd* lessons which I prepared and taught in grades seven through twelve at Manaret ar-Riyadh English Medium Islamic School; hence, the language is purposely uncomplicated. Many of these lessons as well as other lessons in *Fiqh* (Islamic law), Hadith (prophetic traditions) and *Tafsīr* (exegesis) have been circulated in Muslim communities across the United States and in the West Indies. Based on a positive response and a great demand for more

[5] Ibn Abil-'Ezz al-Ḥanafi, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah,* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 8th ed., 1984).

such material, I decided to put this book together by revising the *Tawḥīd* lessons and by adding a few more pertinent topics. I pray that Allah (ﷻ) accept this effort and make it of real benefit to all who read it, for it is ultimately Allah's acceptance alone that really counts, and success is only by His will.

Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

Chapter One

THE CATEGORIES OF *TAWḤĪD*

Literally *Tawḥīd* means "unification" (making something one) or "asserting oneness," and it comes from the Arabic verb *waḥḥada* which itself means to unite, unify, or consolidate.[1] However, when the term *Tawḥīd* is used in reference to Allah (i.e. *Tawḥīdullāh*[2]), it means realizing and maintaining of Allah's unity in all of man's actions which directly or indirectly relate to Him. It is the belief that Allah is One, without partner in His dominion (*Rubūbīyah*), One without similitude in His essence and attributes (*Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt*), and One without rival in His divinity and in worship (*Ulūhīyah / 'Ibādah*). These three aspects form the basis for the categories into which the science of *Tawḥīd* has been traditionally divided. The three overlap and are inseparable to

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[1] J.M. Cowan, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (Spoken Language Services Inc., New York, 3rd. ed., 1976), p. 1055.

[2] The word *tawḥīd* does not actually occur in either the Qur'an or in the statements (Hadiths) of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, when the Prophet sent Mu'ādh ibn Jabal as governor of Yemen in 9 AH, he told him, "You will be going to Christians and Jews (*Ahl al-Kitāb*), so the first thing you should invite them to is the assertation of the oneness of Allah (*Yuwaḥḥidoo Allah*)." Narrated by Ibn 'Abbās and collected by Bukhari, Muḥammad Muḥsin Khan, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-Eng.), Riyadh: Maktabah ar-Riyadh al-Ḥadeetha, 1981, vol. 9, Pp. 348-9, hadith no. 469 and Muslim, Abdul Hamid Siddeeqi, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, (Eng. Trans.), Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1987, vol. 1, Pp. 14-5, hadith no. 27. In this hadith the present tense of the verb from which the verbal noun *Tawḥīd* is derived was used by the Prophet (ﷺ).

such a degree that whoever omits any one aspect has failed to complete the requirements of *Tawḥīd*. The omission of any of the above mentioned aspects of *Tawḥīd* is referred to as *Shirk* (lit. sharing); the association of partners with Allah. In Islamic terms, is in fact idolatry.

The three categories of *Tawḥīd* are commonly referred to by the following titles:

1. *Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbīyah* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Lordship") that is, affirming that Allah is one, without partners in his sovereignty.
2. *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Names and Attributes,") that is, affirming that they are incomparable and unique.
3. *Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Worship") that is, affirming that Allah is alone in His right to be worshipped.[3]

The division of *Tawḥīd* into its components was not done by the Prophet (ﷺ) nor by his Companions, as there was no necessity to analyze such a basic principle of faith in this fashion. However, the foundations of the components are all implied in the verses of the Qur'an and in the explanatory statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), as will become evident to the reader when each category is dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

The necessity for this analytical approach to the principle of *Tawḥīd* arose after Islam spread into Egypt, Byzantium, Persia and India[4] and absorbed the cultures of these regions. It is only

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[3] Ibn Abil-'Ezz al-Ḥanafī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 78.

[4] South Asia, i.e., presently Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, etc.

natural to expect that when the peoples of these lands entered the fold of Islam, they would carry with them some of the remnants of their former beliefs. When some of these new converts began to express in writings and discussions, their various philosophical concepts of God, confusion arose in which the pure and simple unitarian belief of Islam became threatened. There were also others who had outwardly accepted Islam but secretly worked to destroy the religion from within, due to their inability to oppose it militarily. This group began to actively propagate distorted ideas about Allah among the masses in order to tear down the first pillar of *Eemān* (faith) and with it Islam istself.

According to Muslim historians, the first Muslim to express the position of man's free will and the absence of destiny (*qadar*) was in Iraqi convert from Christianity by the name of Sausan. Sausan later reverted to Christianity but not before infecting his student, Ma'bad ibn Khālid al-Juhani from Basrah. Ma'bad spread the teachings of his master until he was caught and executed by the Umayyad Caliph, 'Abdul-Malik ibn Marwān (685-705), in the year 700 CE.[5] The younger *Ṣaḥābah* who were alive during this period, like 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (d. 694 CE) and 'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfā (d. 705 CE), advised the people not to greet those who denied destiny nor perform funeral prayers for them when they died. That is, they considered them to be disbelievers.[6] However, Christian philosophical arguments for free-will continued to find new supporters. Ghailān ibn Muslim from Damascus studied under Ma'bad and championed the cause of free will until he was brought before Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz (717-720 CE). He recanted his beliefs publicly; however, on

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[5] Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb at-Tahdhīb*, (Hyderabad, 1325-7), vol. 10, p. 225.

[6] 'Abdul-Qāhir ibn Tāhir al-Baghdādi, *al-Farq bain al-Firaq*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah), Pp. 19-20.

the caliph's death, he resumed teaching free will. The following caliph, Hishām ibn 'Abdul-Malik (724-743 CE), had him arrested, tried and executed.[7] Another prominent figure in this controversy was al-Ja'd ibn Dirham, who not only supported the philosophy of free will, but also attempted to re-interpret the Qur'anic verses containing descriptions of Allah's qualities according to neo-platonic philosophy. Al-Ja'd was at one point a tutor for the Umayyad prince, Marwān ibn Muhammad, who later became the fourteenth caliph (744-750 CE). During his lectures in Damascus, he openly denied some of Allah's attributes, like seeing, hearing, etc., until the Umayyad governor expelled him.[8] He then fled to Kufah, where he continued to propound his ideas and gather followers until his heretical opinions became widely publicized and the Umayyad governor, Khālid ibn 'Abdullah, had him publicly executed in 736 CE. However, his main disciple, Jahm ibn Safwān, continued to defend his master's doctrines in philosophical circles in Tirmidh and Balakh. When his heresies became widespread, he was executed by the Umayyad governor, Nasr ibn Sayyār, in 743 C.E.[9]

The early Caliphs and their governors were closer to Islamic principles, and the consciousness of the masses was higher due to the presence of the Prophet's Companions and their students. Hence, the demand for the elimination of open heretics received immediate response from the rulers. In contrast, the later Umayyad Caliphs were more corrupt and as such cared little about

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[7] Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Karīm ash-Shahrastāni, *al-Milal wan-Nihal*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2nd ed., 1975), vol. 1, p. 30.

[8] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *ar-Radd 'alā al-Jahmīyah*, (Riyadh: Dār al-Liwā, 1st ed., 1977), Pp. 41-3.

[9] Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Karīm ash-Shahrastāni, *al-Milal wan-Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 46.

such religious issues. The masses were also less Islamically conscious and thus were more susceptible to deviant ideas. As greater numbers of people entered Islam, and the learning of an increasing number of conquered nations was absorbed, the execution of apostates was no longer used to stem the rising tide of heresy. The task of opposing the tide of heresy fell on the shoulders of the Muslim scholars of this period who rose to meet the challenge intellectually. They systematically opposed the various alien philosophies and creeds by categorizing them and countering them with principles deduced from the Qur'an and Sunnah. It was out of this defense that the science of *Tawḥīd* emerged, with its precisely defined categories and components. This process of specialization occurred simultaneously in all of the other areas of Islamic knowledge too, as it has done in the various secular sciences of today. Therefore, as the categories of *Tawḥīd* are studied separately and in more depth, it must not be forgotten that they are all a part of an organic whole which is itself the foundation of a greater whole, Islam itself.

Tawḥid ar-Rubūbiyah (Maintaining the Unity of Lordship)

This category is based on the fundamental concept that Allah (ﷻ) alone caused all things to exist when there was nothing; He sustains and maintains creation without any need from it or for it; and He is the sole Lord of the universe and its inhabitants without any real challenge to His sovereignty. In Arabic the word used to describe this creator-sustainer quality is *Rubūbīyah* which is derived from the root *Rabb* (Lord). According to this category, since God is the only real power in existence, it is He who gave all things the power to move and to change. Nothing happens in creation except what He allows to

happen. In recognition of this reality, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) used to often repeat the exclamatory phrase, "*Lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā billāh.*" (There is no movement nor power except by Allah's will).

The basis for the *Rubūbīyah* concept can be found in many Qur'anic verses. For example, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿ٱللَّهُ خَٰلِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٖ وَكِيلٞ ۝٦٢﴾

(سورة الزُّمَر: ٦٢)

"*Allah created all things and He is the agent on which all things depend.*" (Qur'an 39: 62)

﴿وَٱللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمۡ وَمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ ۝٩٦﴾ (سورة الصَّافات: ٩٦)

"*And Allah created you all and whatever you do.*" (Qur'an 37: 96)

﴿... وَمَا رَمَيۡتَ إِذۡ رَمَيۡتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ رَمَىٰ ... ۝١٧﴾

(سورة الأنفال: ١٧)

"*... It was not you who threw when you threw, but it was Allah Who threw...*" (Qur'an 8: 17)[10]

﴿مَآ أَصَابَ مِن مُّصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذۡنِ ٱللَّهِۗ ... ۝١١﴾

(سورة التّغابُن: ١١)

"*And no calamity strikes except by Allah's permission ...*" (Qur'an 64: 11)

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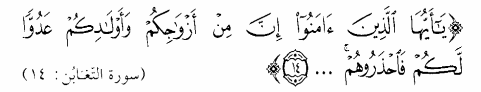
[10] This was in reference to a miraculous incident which took place when the Prophet (ﷺ) gathered some dust in his hand and threw it at the enemy (at the beginning of the Battle of Badr). Allah caused the dust to reach the faces of the enemy in spite of their great distance.

The Prophet (ﷺ) further elaborated on this concept saying,

> "Be aware that if the whole of mankind gathered together in order to do something to help you, they would only be able to do something for you which Allah had already written for you. Likewise, if the whole of mankind gathered together to harm you, they would only be able to do something to harm you which Allah had already written to happen to you."[11]

Thus, what man conceives as good fortune and misfortune are merely events predestined by Allah as part of the tests of this life. The incidents follow patterns set only by Allah.

Allah (ﷻ) has said in the Qur'an:



"*O' Believers! Surely there is in your wives and children an enemy for you, so beware of them...*" (Qur'an 64: 14)

That is, within the good things of this life there are severe tests of one's faith in God. Likewise, in the terrible events of life there lies test as is mentioned in the verse,

﴿وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ وَٱلْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ ٱلْأَمْوَٰلِ وَٱلْأَنفُسِ وَٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلصَّـٰبِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٥٥)

"*Surely We will test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth*

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[11] Reported by Ibn 'Abbās and collected by Tirmidhi. See 'Ezzeddin Ibrahīm and Denys Johnson - Davies, *an-Nawawi's Forty Hadeeth*, (English Trans., Damascus, Syria: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1976, p. 68, hadith no. 19).

and life and the fruits of your work, so give glad tidings to those who are patient." *(Qur'an 2: 155)*

Sometimes the patterns are recognizable, as in the case of cause and effect relationships, and sometimes they are not, as in the case when apparently good results come from evil means or bad results from good means. God has explained that the wisdom behind these apparent irregularities is often beyond man's immediate comprehension due to his limited scope of knowledge:

﴿ ... وَعَسَىٰٓ أَن تَكْرَهُوا۟ شَيْـًٔا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَعَسَىٰٓ أَن تُحِبُّوا۟ شَيْـًٔا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢١٦﴾ ﴾

(سورة البَقَرَة: ٢١٦)

"... *It is possible that you dislike something which is really good for you, or like something bad for you, but Allah knows [what is best for you], and you do not.*"
(Qur'an 2: 216)

Apparently evil events in human lives sometimes turn out to be for the best, and apparently good things which people desire turn out to be harmful. Consequently, man's realm of influence in the course of events which make up his life is limited to mental choice between options presented to him and not the actual results of his choice. In other words, "Man proposes and God disposes." Apparent "good fortune" and "misfortune" are both from Allah and cannot be caused by good-luck charms such as rabbits' feet, four-leaf clovers, wishbones, lucky numbers, zodiacal signs, etc., or by omens of bad luck like Friday the thirteenth, breaking mirrors, black cats, etc. In fact, the belief in charms and omens is a manifestation of the grave sin of *shirk* (association) in this form of *Tawḥīd.* 'Uqbah (رضي الله عنه), one of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), reported that,

> "Once a group of men approached Allah's Messenger to give their allegiance to him, and he accepted the oath from nine of them but refused to accept it from one. When they asked him why he refused their companion's oath, he replied, 'Verily, he is wearing an amulet (protecting charm).' [12] The man who was wearing the amulet put his hand in his cloak, pulled the amulet off, broke it, and then made the oath. The Prophet then said, 'Whoever wears an amulet has committed *shirk*.'"[13]

As for using the Qur'an like a charm or amulet by wearing or carrying Qur'anic verses on chains or in pouches to ward off evil or to bring good fortune, there is little difference between such practices and those of the pagans. Neither the Prophet (ﷺ) nor his Companions used the Qur'an in this fashion, and the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Whoever innovates in Islam something which does not belong to it will have it rejected."[14]

It is true that the Qur'anic chapters *al-Falaq* and *an-Nāṣ*, were revealed specifically for exorcism (that is, for removing evil spells), but the Prophet (ﷺ) demonstrated the proper method by which they should be used:

> "On an occasion when a spell had been cast on him, he told 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) to recite the two chapters

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[12] A charm worn to bring good fortune or avert evil.

[13] Collected by Aḥmad.

[14] Reported by 'Ā'ishah and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 3, p. 535, hadith no. 861; Muslim, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 931, hadith no. 4266 and also hadith no. 4267; and Abu Dawūd, Ahmad Hasan, *Sunan Abi Dawūd* (English Trans., Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1st. ed., 1984, vol. 3, p. 1294).

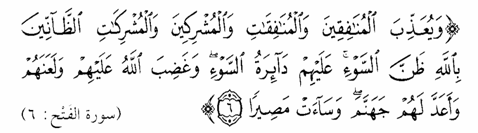
verse by verse, and when he became ill he used to recite them on himself."[15]

He did not write them down and hang them around his neck, tie them on his arm or around his waist, nor did he tell others to do so.

Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt (Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Names and Attributes)

This category of *Tawḥīd* has five main aspects:

1. For the unity of Allah's names and attributes to be maintained in the first aspect, Allah must be referred to according to how He and His Prophet have described Him, without explaining away His names and attributes by giving them meanings other than their obvious meanings. For example, in the Qur'an Allah says that He gets angry with the disbelievers and the hypocrites. He (ﷻ) says:



"That He [Allah] may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the pagans, men and women who have an evil opinion of Allah. A circle of evil is around them; Allah is angry with them, curses them and has prepared for them an evil end." (Qur'an 48: 6)

Thus, anger is one of God's attributes. It is incorrect to say that His anger must mean His punishment since anger is a sign of

[15] Reported by 'Ā'ishah and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 6, p. 495, hadith no. 535 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1195, hadith no. 5439-40.

weakness in man and, as such, not befitting of Allah. What Allah has stated should be accepted, with the qualification that His anger is not like human anger, based on Allah's statement:

﴿... لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَيْءٌ ... ﴿١١﴾﴾ (سورة الشورى: ١١)

"... *There is nothing like Him...*" (Qur'an 42: 11)

The process of so-called "rational" interpretation when taken to its logical conclusion results in the denial of God's very existence. For Allah describes Himself as living and man lives, therefore, according to this "rationalist" argument, God is neither living nor existing. The fact is that the similarity between God's attributes and those of mankind is only in name and not in degree. When attributes are used in reference to God, they are to be taken in the absolute sense, free from human deficiencies.

2. The second aspect of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* involves referring to Allah as He has referred to Himself without giving Him any new names or attributes. For example, Allah may not be given the name *al-Ghāḍib* (the Angry One), in spite of the fact that He has said that He gets angry, because neither Allah nor His messenger has used this name. This may seem to be a very fine point, but it must be maintained in order to prevent the false description of God. That is, finite man is in no position to define the infinite Lord of creation.

3. In the third aspect of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* Allah is referred to without giving Him the attributes of His creation. For example, it is claimed in the Bible and Torah that Allah spent the first six days creating the universe then slept on the seventh.[16] For

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[16] Genesis 2:2, "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done." (Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, Nelson, 1951, p. 2.)

this reason, Jews and Christians take either Saturday or Sunday as a day of rest during which work is looked at as a sin. Such a claim assigns to God the attributes of His creation. It is man who tires after heavy work and needs sleep to recuperate.[17] Elsewhere in the Bible and Torah, God is portrayed as repenting for His bad thoughts in the same way that humans do when they realize their errors.[18] Similarly the claim that God is a spirit or has a spirit completely ruins this area of *Tawḥīd.* Allah does not refer to Himself as a spirit anywhere in the Qur'an nor does His Prophet (ﷺ) express anything of that nature in hadith. In fact, Allah refers to the spirit as part of His creation.[19]

The key principle which should be followed when dealing with Allah's attributes is the Qur'anic formula,

﴿... لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾﴾

(سورة الشورىٰ: ١١)

"*... There is nothing like Him, and He is the hearer and seer of all.*" (Qur'an 42: 11)

The attributes of hearing and seeing are among human attributes, but when they are attributed to The Divine Being they are without comparison in their perfection. However, when these attributes are associated with men they necessitate ear and eye apparatuses which cannot be attributed to God. What man knows

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[17] In contrast Allah says explicitly in the Qur'an, ﴾No tiredness overcomes Him nor sleep...﴿ (Qur'an 2: 255).

[18] Exodus 32:14, "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people." (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

[19] Allah clearly states that in the following verse: ﴾They ask you [Muhammad] about the spirit. Tell [them] that the spirit [exists] by my Lord's command.﴿ (Qur'an 17: 85)

about the Creator is only what little He has revealed to him through His prophets. Therefore, man is obliged to stay within these narrow limits. When man gives free reign to his intellect in describing God, he is liable to fall into errors by assigning to Allah the attributes of His creation.

In their love of pictorial representations, Christians have painted, carved and molded innumerable human likenesses and called them images of God. These have served to pave the way for the acceptance of Jesus' divinity among the masses. Once they accepted the conception of the Creator as being like a human being, accepting Jesus as God presented no real problem.

4. The third aspect of *Tawḥīd as-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* requires that man not be given the attributes of Allah. For example, in the New Testament, Paul takes the figure of Melchizedek, king of Salem, from the Torah (Genesis 14:18-20) and gives both him and Jesus the divine attribute of having no beginning or end:

> "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. <u>He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the son of God he continues a priest forever.</u>"[20]

> "So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, 'Thou art my son, today I have begotten thee'; as he says also in

[20] Hebrews, 7:1-3, (Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version).

another place, 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.'"[21]

Most *Shi'ite* sects (with the exception of the *Zaidites* of Yemen) have given their "*Imams*" divine attributes of absolute infallibility,[22] knowledge of the past, the future and the unseen, the ability to change destiny[23] and control over the atoms of creation.[24] In so doing they set up rivals who share God's unique attributes and who, in fact, become gods besides Allah.

5. Maintaining the unity of Allah's names also means that Allah's names in the definite form cannot be given to His creation unless preceded by the prefix *'Abd* meaning "slave of" or "servant of." Many of the Divine names in their indefinite form like *Ra'ūf* and *Raḥīm* are allowable names for me because Allah has used some of them in their indefinite forms to refer to the Prophet (ﷺ):

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[21] Hebrews, 5:5-6 (Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version).

[22] Muhammad Riḍa al-Muzaffar states in his book *Faith of Shi'a Islam*, (U.S.A.: Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2nd ed. 1983): "We believe that, like the prophet, an Imam must be infallible, that is to say incapable of making errors or doing wrong, either inwardly or outwardly, from his birth to his death, either intentionally or unintentionally, because the Imams are the preservers of Islam and it is under their protection" (p. 32). See also *Islam*, (Teheran: A Group of Muslim Brothers, 1973), p. 35, by Syed Sa'īd Akhtar Rizvi.

[23] Al-Muzaffar further states: "We maintain that the powers of the Imams to receive inspiration has reached the highest degree of excellence, and we say that it is a Divinely-given power. By this means the Imam is able to understand information about anything, anywhere, and at any time, and he understands by means of this Divinely - given power at once, without recourse to methodological reasoning or guidance from a teacher.

[24] Al-Khomeini states: "Certainly the Imam has a dignified station, a lofty rank, a creational caliphate, and sovereignty and mastery over all atoms of creation." (Āyatullāh Musavi al-Khomeini, *al-Hukoomah al-Islāmīyah*, Beirut: at-Talee'ah Press, Arabic ed., 1979, p. 52)

﴿لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾﴾

(سورة التوبة: ١٢٨)

"*A messenger has come to you from among yourselves who is grieved by whatever afflicts you. He is full of concern for you, full of pity [Ra'ūf] and full of mercy [Raḥīm] for the believers.*" (Qur'an 9: 128)

But *ar-Ra'ūf* (the One Most Full of Pity) and *ar-Raḥīm* (the Most Merciful) can only be used to refer to men if they are preceded by *'Abd* as in *'Abdur-Ra'ūf* or *'Abdur-Raḥīm,* since in the definite form they represent a level of perfection which only belongs to God. Similarly, names like *'Abdur-Rasool* (slave of the messenger), *'Abdun-Nabi* (slave of the Prophet), *'Abdul-Ḥusayn* (slave of Ḥusayn), etc., where people name themselves slaves to other than Allah are also forbidden. Based on this principle, the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade Muslims from referring to those put under their charge as *'abdi* (my slave) or *amati* (my slave girl).[25]

Tawḥid al-'Ibādah (Maintaining the Unity of Worship)

In spite of the wide implications of the first two categories of *Tawḥīd,* firm belief in them alone is not sufficient to fulfill the Islamic requirements of *Tawḥīd. Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbīyah* and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* must be accompanied by their complement, *Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah,* in order for *Tawḥīd* to be considered complete according to Islam. This point is

[25] *Sunan Abi Dawūd,* (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, Pp. 1385-6, hadith no. 4957.

substantiated by the fact that Allah Himself has related in clear terms that the *mushrikūn* (idolaters) of the Prophet's time confirmed many aspects of the first two forms of *Tawḥīd*. In the Qur'an Allah tells the Prophet (ﷺ) to say to the pagans:

﴿قُلْ مَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ أَمَّن يَمْلِكُ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْأَبْصَٰرَ وَمَن يُخْرِجُ ٱلْحَىَّ مِنَ ٱلْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ ٱلْمَيِّتَ مِنَ ٱلْحَىِّ وَمَن يُدَبِّرُ ٱلْأَمْرَ فَسَيَقُولُونَ ٱللَّهُ ... ﴿٣١﴾﴾ (سورة يونس: ٣١)

"*Say: 'Who is it that gives you sustenance from the sky and earth, Who governs sight and hearing, and Who brings forth life from dead [matter] and death from the living; and plans the affairs of man?' They will all say: 'Allah'...*" (Qur'an 10: 31)

﴿وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ ٱللَّهُ ... ﴿٨٧﴾﴾

(سورة الزّخرُف: ٨٧)

"*If you asked them who created them, they would surely say, 'Allah'...*" (Qur'an 43: 87)

﴿وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّن نَّزَّلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ ٱلْأَرْضَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولُنَّ ٱللَّهُ ... ﴿٦٣﴾﴾

"*And if indeed you asked them who it is that sends down water from the sky, bringing the earth to life after its death, they would certainly say, 'Allah.'...*"

(Qur'an 29: 63)

The pagan Makkans all knew that Allah, the Exalted, the Almighty was their Creator, Sustainer, their Lord and Master; yet that knowledge did not make them Muslims according to God. In fact, Allah (ﷻ) said:

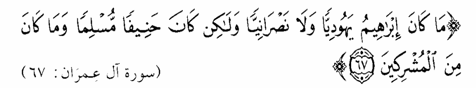
﴿وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُم بِٱللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُم مُّشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾﴾

(سورة يوسف: ١٠٦)

"*Most of them do not believe in Allah except while joining partners to Him.*" (Qur'an 12: 106)

Mujāhid's[26] commentary on this verse was as follows:

> "Their belief in Allah, represented by their statement, 'Allah created us, provides for us and takes our lives, did not stop them from worshipping other gods along with Allah.'[27] From the previously mentioned verses, it is clear that the *kuffār* (disbelievers) knew of Allah's sovereignty, dominion and power. In fact, they used to faithfully devote various types of worship to Him like Ḥajj, charity, animal sacrifices, vows and even prayers in times of dire necessity and calamity. They even used to claim that they were following the religion of Abraham. Because of that claim, Allah (ﷻ) revealed the verse:



﴿مَا كَانَ إِبْرَٰهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَٰكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾﴾

(سورة آل عمران: ٦٧)

"*Abraham was not a Jew, nor was he a Christian, but [he] was a true Muslim and not among those who joined partners with Allah.*" (Qur'an 3: 67)"

Some pagan Makkans even believed in the Resurrection and the Judgement and others in predestination (*qadar*). Ample

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[26] Mujāhid ibn Jubayr al-Makki (642-722) was Ibn 'Abbās' most outstanding student. The narrations of his *Tafsīr* (commentary) of the Qur'an has been compiled by 'Abdur-Raḥmān aṭ-Ṭāhir and published in two volumes under the title, *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, (Islamabad: Majma' al-Buhooth).

[27] Collected by Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabari.

evidence of their belief can be found in pre-Islamic poetry. For example, the poet Zuhayr is reported to have said about punishment:

> "It is either delayed, placed in a book and saved for the Day of Judgement, or hastened and (injustice) avenged."

'Antarah was quoted as saying:

> "O' 'Ebil, to where will you run from death,
> If my Lord in the sky has destined it?"[28]

In spite of the Makkan's confession of *Tawḥīd* and their knowledge of Allah, Allah classified them as disbelievers (*kuffār*) and pagans (*mushrikūn*) simply because they worshipped other gods along with their worship of Allah.

Consequently, the most important aspect of *Tawḥīd* is that of *Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah,* maintaining the unity of Allah's worship. All forms of worship must be directed only to Allah because He alone deserves worship, and it is He alone who can grant benefit to man as a result of His worship. Furthermore, there is no need for any form of intercessor or intermediary between man and God. Allah emphasized the importance of directing worship to Him alone by pointing out that this was the main purpose of man's creation and the essence of the message brought by all the prophets. Allah (ﷻ) says:

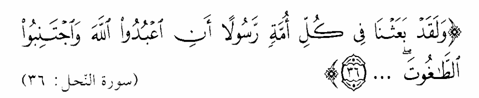


(سورة الذاريات: ٥٦)

"*I did not create the jinn and mankind except for My worship.*" (Qur'an 51: 56)

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[28] Quoted in Sulaymān ibn 'Abdul-Waḥḥāb's *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmi, 2nd. edition, 1970, p. 34).



"*Verily, We have sent to every nation a messenger [saying], 'Worship Allah and avoid false gods'...*"

(Qur'an 16: 36)

Understanding the purpose of creation in a complete sense is beyond man's innate abilities. Man is a finite created being and cannot reasonably hope to fully comprehend the actions of the infinite Creator. Hence, God made it a part of man's nature to worship Him, and He sent prophets and books of divine revelation to clarify the aspect of the purpose of creation which was within man's mental ability to grasp. That purpose is, as previously mentioned: the worship of God (*'Ibādah*) and the main message of the prophets was to worship God alone, (*Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah*). Consequently, the gravest sin is *shirk,* the worship of others instead of Allah or along with Allah.

In *Sūrah al-Fāṭiḥah*, which every Muslim is required to recite in his or her prayers, at least seventeen times daily, verse four reads, "*You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we seek help*". This is a clear statement that all forms of worship should only be directed to the One Who can respond — Allah. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) confirmed the concept of unity of worship saying,

> "If you ask in prayer, ask only Allah, and if you seek help, seek it only from Allah."[29]

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[29] Reported by Ibn 'Abbās and collected by Tirmidhi, See *an-Nawawi's Forty Hadith*, (English Trans.), p. 68.

The absence of any need for intercession is further emphasized by the many verses indicating His closeness to man. For example:

﴿وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِى عَنِّى فَإِنِّى قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ ٱلدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا۟ لِى وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا۟ بِى لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١٨٦)

"*When My servants ask you [O' Muhammad] about Me [tell them], 'Verily I am close [to them]; I listen to the prayer of every one who calls on Me. So let them respond to Me and believe in Me in order that they may be guided aright.'*" (Qur'an 2: 186)

﴿وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِۦ نَفْسُهُۥ ۖ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ ٱلْوَرِيدِ ﴿١٦﴾﴾. (سورة ق: ١٦)

"*It is We Who created man and We know what his soul whispers to him, for We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.*" (Qur'an 50: 16)

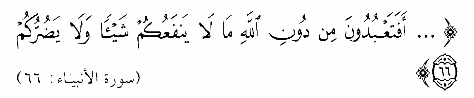
The confirmation of *Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah* conversely necessitates the denial of all forms of intercession or association of partners with Allah. If someone prays to the dead seeking their influence on the lives of the living or the souls of those who have passed away, they have associated a partner with Allah, because worship is being shared between Allah and His creation. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, in no uncertain terms,

"Prayer (*du'ā'*) is worship."[30]

And Allah, the Most Great and Most Glorious said:

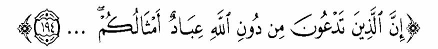
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[30] *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 387, hadith no. 1474.



"*... Do you worship besides Allah that which [cannot and] does not help you at all or harm you?*"

(Qur'an 21: 66)



(سورة الأعراف : ١٩٤)

"*Those on whom you call besides Allah are only slaves like yourselves...*" (Qur'an 7: 194)

If someone prays to the Prophet (ﷺ), or to jinn, angels or so-called saints asking for help or asking them to request help from Allah for them, they have also committed *shirk.* The concept of "*Ghaus-i-Adham" (al-Ghawth al-A'dham*), a title given by the ignorant to 'Abdul-Qādir al-Jeelāni,[31] is also an expression of *shirk* in this form of *Tawḥīd.* The title literally means "the greatest source of rescue; the one most able to save someone from danger," and such a description only belongs to Allah. When misfortune occurs, some people call on 'Abdul-Qādir by this title seeking his aid and protection, even though Allah (ﷻ) has already said:

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[31] 'Abdul Qādir (1077-1166) was a principal of a school of Ḥanabalite Law and a Ribāt (monastery) in Baghdad. His Sermons (collected in *al-Fatḥ ar-Rabbāni*, Cairo 1302) were strictly orthodox with some, mystic interpretations of the Qur'an. Ibn 'Arabi (born 1165) declared him the Quṭb of his time and stated that he had a rank which placed him above all beings except God. 'Ali ibn Yousuf ash-Shattanawfee (d. 1314 CE) wrote a book called *Bahjat al-Asrār* (Cairo, 1304) in which he attributed many miracles to 'Abdul-Qādir. The Qādireeyah Sufi order is named after him and its spiritual exercises and regulations traced back to him. (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Pp. 5-7 and 202-205).

﴿وَإِن يَمْسَسْكَ ٱللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُۥٓ إِلَّا هُوَ ... ﴿١٧﴾﴾

(سورة الأنعام: ١٧)

"If Allah allows harm to befall you none can remove it except Him..." (Qur'an 6: 17)

According to the Qur'an, when the Makkans were questioned about directing their prayers to their idols, they answered,

﴿... مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَآ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰٓ ... ﴿٣﴾﴾

(سورة الزمر: ٣)

"... *We only worship them so that they may bring us closer to Allah...*" (Qur'an 39: 3)

The idols were only used as intermediaries yet Allah called them pagans for their practice. Those among Muslims who insist on praying to other than Allah would do well to reflect on this fact.

Christians, influenced by the teachings of Saul from Tarsus (later called Paul), deified Prophet Jesus and directed their prayer to him and his mother. The Catholics among Christians have saints for every occasion to whom they direct their prayers in the belief that these saints can directly influence the affairs of this world. The Catholics also use their priests as intercessors between themselves and Allah in the mistaken belief that the priests are closer to Allah due to their celibacy and piety, and thus more likely to be listened to by Allah. Most *Shi'ite* sects have devoted certain days of the week and hours of the day for prayer to 'Ali, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn[32] due to their distorted belief in intercession.

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[32] Fāṭimah was the Prophet Muhammad's youngest daughter who was married to the Prophet's cousin 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib, and Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were their sons.

Worship (*'Ibādah*) in the Islamic view, includes more than just fasting, paying zakah, Ḥajj and animal sacrifices. It includes emotions like love, trust, and fear, all of which have degrees which should only be directed to God. Allah has addressed these emotions and warned against excesses in them as follows:

﴿وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ ٱللَّهِ ۖ
وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلَّهِ ۗ ... ﴿١٦٥﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٦٥)

"*There are among men those who take [for worship] others besides Allah as equals to Him. They love them as they should only love Allah. But those who believe have a much greater love of Allah...*" (Qur'an 2: 165)

﴿أَلَا تُقَٰتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَّكَثُوٓا۟ أَيْمَٰنَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا۟ بِإِخْرَاجِ
ٱلرَّسُولِ وَهُم بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ ۚ فَٱللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَن
تَخْشَوْهُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾﴾ (سورة التوبة: ١٣)

"*Will you not fight people who broke their oaths, plotted to expel the messenger and were the first to [attack] you? Do you fear them? Allah has more right to be feared if you are truly believers.*" (Qur'an 9: 13)

﴿... وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوٓا۟ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾﴾

(سورة المائدة: ٢٣)

"*... Put your trust in Allah if you are truly believers.*"
(Qur'an 5: 23)

Since the term *'Ibādah* means total obedience, and Allah is considered the ultimate Lawgiver, the implementation of secular legal systems not based on divine law (Shari'ah) is an act of disbelief in the divine law and belief in the correctness of such

systems, such a belief constitutes a form of worshipping other than Allah (*shirk*). Allah (ﷻ) said in the Qur'an:

﴿ ... وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٤٤)

"... *Those who do not rule by what Allah has revealed are disbelievers.*" (Qur'an 5: 44)

On one occasion, the Prophet's Companion, 'Adi ibn Ḥātim, who was a convert from Christianity, heard the Prophet (ﷺ) recite the Qur'anic verse,

﴿ٱتَّخَذُوٓا۟ أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَٰنَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ ... ﴿٣١﴾﴾ (سورة التوبة: ٣١)

"*They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allah, ...*" (Qur'an 9: 31)

So he said: "Surely we did not worship them." The Prophet (ﷺ) turned to him and said:

> "Did they not make forbidden (*ḥarām*) what Allah had made allowable (*ḥalāl*)[33] and you all made it *ḥarām*, and did they not make *ḥalāl* what Allah made (*ḥarām*)[34] and you all made it *ḥalāl*?" He replied, "We certainly did." The Prophet then said, "That was how you worshipped them."[35]

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[33] Christian clergy made *ḥarām* the marrying of more than one wife and the marrying of first cousins. Roman Catholicism forbade priests from marrying and forbade divorce in general.

[34] The Christian Church made *ḥalāl* the consumption of pork, blood and alcohol. Some of them also made allowable painting and statues depicting God as a man.

[35] Collected by Tirmidhi.

Hence, a significant part of *Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah* involves the implementation of Shari'ah, especially in lands where Muslims form the majority of the population. Divine law has to be re-introduced in the many so-called Muslim countries where governments now rule according to imported capitalist or communist constitutions, and Islamic law is either totally extinct or relegated to a few areas of minor importance. Likewise, Muslim countries where Islamic law is on the books but secular laws are in force, have also to be brought in line with the Shari'ah as it pertains to all aspects of life. The acceptance of non-Islamic rule in place of Shari'ah in Muslim lands is *shirk* and an act of *kufr*. Those in a position to change it must do so, while those unable to do so must speak out against the rule of *kufr* and call for the implementation of Shari'ah. If even this becomes impossible, un-Islamic government must be sincerely hated and despised for the pleasure of God and the upholding of *Tawḥīd*.

Chapter Two

THE CATEGORIES OF *SHIRK*

The study of *Tawḥīd* cannot be considered complete without a careful analysis of its opposite, *shirk*. Some mention of *shirk* has already been made in the previous chapter and examples of it have been given to illustrate how *Tawḥīd* may be obliterated. However, in this chapter *shirk* will be looked at as a separate topic whose grave importance Allah has attested to in the Qur'an:

﴿إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِۦ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ ... ﴿٤٨﴾﴾

(سورة النساء: ٤٨)

"*Surely Allah will not forgive the association of partners [shirk] with Him, but He forgives [sins] less than that of whomever He wishes...*" (Qur'an 4: 48)

Because the sin of *shirk* denies the very purpose of man's creation, it is to God the gravest of sins, the unforgiveable sin.

Shirk literally means partnership, sharing or associating,[1] but Islamically it refers to the act of assigning partners to Allah in whatever form it may take. The following analysis of *shirk* is according to the three broad categories developed in the study of *Tawḥīd*. Hence, we will first look at the main ways in which *shirk* can occur in the area of *Rubūbīyah* (Lordship), then *Asmā' waṣ-*

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[1] *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p. 468.

Ṣifāt (Divine Names and Attributes), and finally in *'Ibādah* (worship).

Shirk in *Rubūbiyah*

This category of *shirk* refers to either the belief that others share Allah's Lordship over creation as His equal or near equal, or to the belief that there exists no Lord over creation at all. Most religious systems fall into the first aspect of *Shirk* in *Rubūbīyah* while it is the philosophers and their man-made philosophies that tend to fill the second aspect.

1. *Shirk* by association

Beliefs which fall under this sub-category are ones in which a main God or Supreme Being over creation is recognized, however His dominion is shared by other lesser gods, spirits, mortals, heavenly bodies or earthly objects. Such belief systems are commonly referred to by theologians and philosophers as either monotheistic (having one God) or polytheistic (having more than one God). According to Islam, all of these systems are polytheistic, and many represent various degrees in the degeneration of divinely revealed religious systems all of which were originally based on *Tawḥīd.*

Within Hinduism the Supreme Being, *Brahma* is conceived as indwelling, all-pervading, unchangeable and eternal, the abstract, impersonal Absolute, in which all things have their origin and end. While the god *Brahma* is the personified creator of the universe who forms a trinity with the preserver god, *Vishnu* and the destroyer god, *Shiva.*[2] Thus, *Shirk* in *Rubūbīyah* is

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[2] W. L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, (New Jersey:=

expressed in Hinduism by the delegation of God's creative, destructive and preservative powers to other gods.

Christian belief states that the one God reveals himself in the three persons of Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and *Holy Spirit.* These three persons are nevertheless regarded as a unity, sharing one 'substance'.[3] Prophet Jesus is elevated to divinity, sits on the right hand of God and judges the world. The *Holy Spirit,* who in the Hebrew Bible is the means by which God exercises His creative power, in Christian thought becomes a part of the God-head. Paul made the *Holy Spirit* the alter ego of Christ, the guide and help of Christians, first manifesting itself on the day of Penecost.[4] Consequently, *Shirk* in *Rubūbīyah* occurs in the Christian belief that Jesus and the *Holy Spirit* are God's partners in all of His dominion, in their belief that Jesus alone pronounces judgement on the world, and in their belief that Christians are helped and guided by the *Holy Spirit.*

Zoroastrians (Parsis) conceive of God, *Ahura Mazda*, as being the creator of all that is good, and is alone worthy of absolute worship. Fire is one of the seven creations of *Ahura Mazda* and is considered his son or representative. But they also commit *Shirk* in *Rubūbīyah* by conceiving of evil, violence and death as being the creation of another god called *Angra Mainyu* whom they represent by the symbol darkness.[5] Hence, God's sovereignty over all creation (i.e. His *Rubūbīyah*) is shared with an evil spirit elevated to the level of an opposing god due to man's desire to not attribute evil to God.

=Humanities Press, 1980), Pp. 66-7 and 586-7. See also John Hinnells, *Dictionary of Religions* (England: Penguin Books, 1984 Pp. 67-8).

[3] *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 337.

[4] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 231.

[5] *Dictionary of Religions*, Pp. 361-2.

In the Yoruba religion, followed by over 10 million people in West Africa (mainly Nigeria), there is one supreme God, *Olorius* (Lord of Heaven) or *Olodumare*. Nevertheless, modern Yoruba religion is characterized by a great many forms of *Orisha* worship, so that it appears as strict polytheism.[6] Consequently, Yorubas commit *Shirk* in *Rubūbīyah* by turning over all of God's functions to minor gods and spirits.

The Zulus of South Africa believe in one God, *Unkulunkulu*, meaning the ancient, the first, the most revered one. The principal specific titles for God are *Nkosi yaphezulu* (Lord of the Sky) and *uMuvelingqanqi* (the first to appear). Their Supreme Being is represented as a male, who, along with the earth female, brings forth the human world. Thunder and lightening are in the Zulu religion acts of God, whereas sickness and other troubles in life may be caused by the ancestors, the *idlozi* or *abaphansi* (those under the earth). The ancestors also protect the living, ask for food, are pleased with ritual and sacrifice, punish neglect and take possession of fortune tellers (*inyanga*).[7] Thus, *Shirk* in *Rubūbīyah* takes place in the Zulu religion not only in their concept of the creation of the human world, but also in their attribution of good and evil in human life to the work of ancestral spirits.

Among some Muslim people, *Shirk* in *Rubūbīyah* is manifested in their belief that the souls of saints and other righteous humans can affect the affairs of this world, even after their deaths. Their souls, it is believed, can fulfil one's needs, remove calamities, and aid whoever calls on them. Therefore, grave worshippers assign to human souls the divine ability to cause events in this life which in fact only Allah (ﷻ) can cause.

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[6] *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 358.

[7] Ibid., p. 363.

Common among many *Sufis* (Muslim mystics) is the belief in "*Rijāl al-Ghayb*"[8] (men of the unseen) the chief of whom occupies the station called "*Quṭub*" from which the affairs of this world are governed.[9]

2. *Shirk* by negation

This sub-category represents the various philosophies and ideologies which deny the existence of God either explicitly or implicitly. That is, in some cases God's non-existence is stated (Atheism), while in other cases His existence is claimed, but the way in which He is conceived actually denies His existence (Pantheism).

There are a few ancient religious "systems" in which God does not exist, foremost among them being the system attributed to Gautama Buddha. Buddhism, a reformist movement in Hinduism opposed to the caste system, was founded in the 6th century B.C. during the same period as Jainism. During the 3rd century B.C. it became the state religion. Eventually it was assimilated by Hinduism, Buddha himself becoming one of the *Avatars* (incarnations of God). It disappeared from India but became dominant in China and other Eastern nations. *Hinayana* Buddhism (400-250 BC), the earlier and more strict of the two interpretations of Buddhism which arose after Gautama Buddha's death, makes it clear that there is no God; hence the burden of salvation belongs to the individual alone.[10] Thus, this ancient

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8 Literally, "men of the unseen world." The world is supposed to endure due to the intercessions of a hierarchy of "averting" Saints whose number are fixed, the place of one who dies being immediately filled. (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 582)

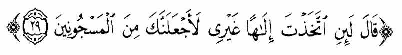
9 *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Pp. 55.

10 *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 72.

strain of Buddhism could be classified as an example of *shirk* in *Rubūbīyah* wherein God's existence is explicitly denied.

Similarly, in the teachings of Jainism as systematized by Vardhamana, there is no God, but liberated souls achieve something of this status, having immortality and omniscience; and the religious community treats the liberated ones as though they were divine, building temples to them and venerating their images.[11]

Another ancient example is that of the Pharaoh of Prophet Moses' time. Allah (ﷻ) mentioned in the Qur'an that he negated the existence of God and claimed to Moses and the people of Egypt that he, Pharaoh, was the only true lord of all creation. Allah (ﷻ) quoted him as saying to Moses (Mūsa) (عليه السلام),



(سورة الشُّعَرَاء: ٢٩)

"If you choose a god besides me, I will surely imprison you." (Qur'an 26: 29)

And to the people:

﴿فَقَالَ أَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمُ ٱلۡأَعۡلَىٰ ٢٤﴾ (سورة النّازعات: ٢٤)

"He proclaimed, 'I am your Lord, the Most High.'" (Qur'an 79: 24)

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a number of European philosophers asserted the non-existence of God in what became know as the "death of God philosophy." The German philosopher Philipp Mainlander (1841-1876) in his principal

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[11] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, Pp. 262-3.

writing, *The Philosophy of Redemption,* 1876, states that the world begins with the death of God, since God is a principle of unity shattered in the plurality of the world and a principle of joy denied in the law of suffering which dominates the world.[12] In Prussia, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) supported the idea of the "death of God" proposing that God was nothing more than a projection of man's uneasy conscience and that man was the bridge to the Superman.[13] Jean Paul Sartre, a French philosopher of the twentieth century, also echoed the "death of God" thought. He claimed that God could not exist because He was a contradiction in terms. The idea of God, according to him, is a projection which man must make, being what he is.[14]

Darwin's (d. 1882) proposal that man was merely a glorified ape was widely adopted in the theories of social scientists and philosophers of the nineteenth century as it provided a "scientific" basis for the non-existence of God. According to them religion evolved from animism to monotheism along with man's supposed social evolution from an independant individual to a national state and his physical evolution from ape to man.

Evolutionists attempt to escape the questions surrounding creation by claiming that there was none, and by assigning Allah's attribute of being without beginning and end to matter which He has created. Present day holders of this belief are the followers of Karl Marx, Communists and scientific socialists, who claim that the origin of everything in existence is matter in motion. They further claim that God is figment of man's imagination, created by the ruling classes to justify their hereditary rule and divert the

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[12] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 327.

[13] Ibid., p. 391.

[14] Ibid, Pp. 508-9.

attention of the oppressed masses from the realities in which they live.

An example of this form of *shirk* among Muslims is that of many *Sufis* such as Ibn 'Arabi, who claim that only Allah exists (All is Allah, and Allah is all). They deny the separate identity of Allah and thereby in fact deny His existence. This idea was also expressed in the 17th century by the Dutch Jewish philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, who claimed that God is the total of all parts of the universe including man.

Shirk in *al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt*

Shirk in this category includes both the common pagan practice of giving Allah the attributes of His creation as well as the act of giving created beings Allah's names and attributes.

1. *Shirk* by humanization

In this aspect of *shirk* in *al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt,* Allah is given the form and qualities of human beings and animals. Due to man's superiority over animals, the human form is more commonly used by idolaters to represent God in creation. Consequently, the image of the Creator is often painted, moulded or carved in the shape of human beings possessing the physical features of those who worship them. For example, Hindus and Buddhists worship countless idols in the likeness of Asian men and consider them manifestations of God in creation. Modern day Christian belief that the Prophet Jesus was God incarnate; that the Creator became His creation, is another good example of this type of *shirk.* There have been many so-called great Christian painters like Michaelangelo (d. 1565), who painted pictures of God as a naked old European man with long flowing white hair and beard on the

ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. These pictures have, in turn, been held by the Christian world in the highest esteem.

2. *Shirk* by deification

This form of *shirk* in *al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* relates to cases where created beings or things are given, or claim, Allah's names or His attributes. For example, it was the practice of the ancient Arabs to worship idols whose names were derived from the names of Allah. Their main three idols were: *al-Lāt*, taken from Allah's name *al-Ilāh*; *al-'Uzza*, taken from *al-'Azīz*; and *al-Manāt*, taken from *al-Mannān*. During the Prophet Muhammad's era there was also a false prophet in a region of Arabic called Yamāmah, who took the name *Raḥmān* which only belongs to Allah.

Among the *Shi'ite* sects is the *Nuṣayrīyah* of Syria, who believe that the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib, was a manifestation of Allah and give him many of Allah's qualities. Among them too are the *Ismāi'ilis,* also known as Agha Khanees, who consider their leader, the Agha Khan, to be God incarnate. Also include in this category are the *Druze* of Lebanon who believe that the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ḥākim bi Amrillāh, was the last manifestation of Allah among mankind.

Claims of *Sufis* (Muslim mystics) like al-Hallāj that they have become one with God and as such exist as manifestations of the Creator within His creation may also be included in this aspect of *shirk* in *al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt.* Modern-day spiritualists and mediums, such as Shirley Maclaine and J.Z. Knight, often claim divinity for themselves as well as mankind in general. Einstein's theory of relativity ($E=mc^2$, energy is equal to mass times the square of the speed of light) taught in all schools, is in fact an expression of *shirk* in *al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt.* The theory states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed; it merely transforms

into matter and vice versa. However, both matter and energy are created entities and they both will be destroyed, as Allah (ﷻ) clearly states:

﴿ٱللَّهُ خَٰلِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ... ﴾ (سورة الزمر: ٦٢)

"*Allah is the creator of all things...*" (Qur'an 39: 62)

﴿كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴾ (سورة الرحمن: ٢٦)

"*Everything in [the world] will perish.*" (Qur'an 55: 26)

The theory also implies that mass and energy are eternal having no beginning or end since they are supposed to be uncreated and transform into each other. However, this attribute belongs only to Allah who alone is without beginning or end.

Darwin's theory of evolution is also an attempt to explain the evolution of life and its forms from lifeless matter without the intervention of God. One of the leading Darwinists of this century, Sir Aldous Huxley expressed this thought as follows:

> "Darwinism removed the whole idea of God as the creator of organisms from the sphere of rational discussion."[15]

Shirk* in *al-'Ibādah

In this category of *shirk,* acts of worship are directed to other than God and the reward for worship is sought from the creation instead of the Creator. As in the case of the previous categories, *shirk* in *al-'Ibādah* has two main aspects.

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[15] Quoted in Francis Hitching's, *The Neck of the Giraffe*, (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1982, p. 254 from Tax and Callender, 1960, vol. III, p. 45).

1. ***Ash-Shirk al-Akbar*** **(Major *shirk*)**

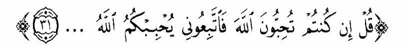
This form of *shirk* occurs when any act or worship is directed to other than Allah. It represents the most obvious form of idolatry, which the prophets were specifically sent by Allah to call the masses of mankind away from. This concept is supported by Allah's statement in the Qur'an:

﴿وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱجْتَنِبُوا۟ ٱلطَّٰغُوتَ ... ﴿٣٦﴾﴾
(سورة النحل: ٣٦)

"*Surely we have sent to every nation a messenger saying, worship Allah and avoid ṭāghūt [false gods]...*"

(Qur'an 16: 36)

Ṭāghūt actually means anything which is worshipped along with Allah or instead of Allah. For example, love is a form of worship which, in its perfection, should only be directed to Allah (ﷻ). In Islam, the love of God is expressed by total obedience to Him. It is not the type of love which man naturally feels toward creation; towards parents, children, food, etc. To direct that type of love towards God is to lower Him to the level of His creation which is *shirk* in *al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt.* Love that is worship is the total surrender of one's will to God. Consequently, Allah (ﷻ) told the Prophet (ﷺ) to tell the believers:



(سورة آل عمران: ٣١)

"*Say: 'If you love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you...'*"

(Qur'an 3: 31)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also told his Companions,

> "None of you is a true believer until I become more beloved to him than his child, his father and the whole of mankind."[16]

Love of the Prophet (ﷺ) is not based on his humanity but on the divine origin of his message. Thus, like the love of Allah, it is also expressed by total obedience to his commands. Allah (ﷻ) said in the final revelation:

﴿مَّن يُطِعِ ٱلرَّسُولَ فَقَدۡ أَطَاعَ ٱللَّهَ ... ﴿٨٠﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ٨٠)

"*Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...*"

(Qur'an 4: 80)

And:

﴿قُلۡ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلرَّسُولَ ... ﴿٣٢﴾﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٣٢)

"*Say: 'Obey Allah and obey the Prophet...*'"

(Qur'an 3: 32)

If man allows the love of anything or anyone to come between himself and Allah, then he has worshipped that thing. In this way, money can become one's god or even one's desires could become a god. The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "The worshipper of the *dirham* will always be miserable,"[17]

And Allah (ﷻ) said in the Qur'an,

﴿أَرَءَيۡتَ مَنِ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُۥ هَوَىٰهُ ... ﴿٤٣﴾﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٤٣)

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[16] Reported by Anas and collected by Bukhari, (English Arabic), vol. 1, p. 20, hadith no. 13 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 31, hadith no. 71.

[17] Reported by Bukhari, (English Arabic), vol. 8, p. 296, hadith no. 443.

"*Have you not seen the one who takes his desires as his god?...*" (Qur'an 25: 43)

Much emphasis has been placed on the evils of *shirk* in *'Ibādah* (worship) because it contradicts the very purpose of creation as expressed in Allah's statement:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾﴾

(سورة الذاريات: ٥٦)

"*I have not created Jinn or mankind except for My worship.*" (Qur'an 51: 56)

Major *shirk* represents the greatest act of rebellion against the Lord of the Universe, and is thus the ultimate sin. It is a sin so great that it virtually cancels out all good a person may do and guarantees its perpetrator eternal damnation in Hell. Consequently, false religion is based primarily on this form of *shirk*. All man-made systems in one way or another invite their followers to the worship of creation. Christians are called upon to pray to a man, a Prophet of God named Jesus, whom they claim to have been God incarnate. Catholics among Christians pray to Mary as the "mother of God", to the angels like Michael who is honoured on September 29, Michaelmas Day, as St. Michael[18], as well as to human saints, whether real or fictitious.

Muslims whose acts of worship fall into this category of *shirk* are those who pray to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) or to mystics in the *Sufi* hierarchy of saints, believing that they can answer their prayers, though Allah has clearly said in the Qur'an:

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[18] William Halsey (ed.), *Colliers Encyclopedia*, (U.S.A.: Crowell-Collier Educational Foundation, 1970, vol. 16, p. 110).

﴿قُلۡ أَرَءَيۡتَكُمۡ إِنۡ أَتَىٰكُمۡ عَذَابُ ٱللَّهِ أَوۡ أَتَتۡكُمُ ٱلسَّاعَةُ أَغَيۡرَ ٱللَّهِ تَدۡعُونَ إِن كُنتُمۡ صَٰدِقِينَ ۝٤٠﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٤٠)

"*Say: 'Think to yourselves; if there came upon you Allah's punishment or the Final Hour, would you then call on other than Allah? [Reply] if you are truthful.*"

(Qur'an 6: 40)

2. *Ash-Shirk al-Asghar* (Minor *shirk*)

Maḥmood ibn Lubayd reported, "Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

> "The thing I fear for you the most is *ash-Shirk al-Asghar* (minor *shirk*). The Companions asked O' Messenger of Allah, what is minor *shirk*? He replied, *'ar-Riyā'* (showing off), for verily Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection when people are receiving their rewards, 'Go to those for whom you were showing off in the material world and see if you can find any reward from them.'"[19]

Maḥmood ibn Lubayd also said, the Prophet (ﷺ) came out and announced,

> "O' people, beware of secret *shirk*!' The people asked, 'O' Messenger of Allah, what is secret *shirk*?' He replied, 'When a man gets up to pray and strives to beautify his prayer because people are looking at him, that is secret *shirk*.'"[20]

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[19] Reported by Aḥmad, aṭ-Ṭabarāni and al-Bayhaqi in *az-Zuhd*, See *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 118.

[20] Collected by Ibn Khuzaymah.

Ar-Riyā'

Riyā' is the practice of performing any of the various forms of worship in order to be seen and praised by people. This sin destroys all the benefits that lie in righteous deeds and brings on the one who commits it a serious punishment. It is particularly dangerous, because it is natural for man to desire and enjoy the praise of his fellow men. Doing religious acts to impress people or in order to be praised by them is, therefore, an evil which deserves man's utmost caution. This danger is really significant to the believers, whose goal is to make all of the acts of their lives religious acts dedicated to God. In fact, the likelihood that knowledgeable true believers would commit *ash-Shirk al-Akbar* is small, since its pitfalls are so obvious. But, for the true believer like everyone else, the chance of committing *riyā'* is great because it is so hidden. It only involves the simple act of changing one's intention. The motivating forces behind it are also very strong, since it comes from man's inner nature. Ibn 'Abbās alluded to this reality when he said,

> "*Shirk* is more hidden than a black ant creeping on a black stone in the middle of a moonless night."[21]

Thus, great care has to be taken to ensure that one's intentions begin pure and remain pure whenever righteous deeds are being done. In order to ensure this, the saying of Allah's name is enjoined in Islam before all acts of importance. A series of *du'ās* (informal prayers) have also been prescribed by the Prophet (ﷺ) before and after all natural habits like eating, drinking, sleeping, sex, and even going to the toilet, in order to turn these everyday habits into acts of worship and develop in Muslims a

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[21] Reported by Ibn Abi Ḥātim and quoted in *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 587.

keen awareness of Allah. It is this awareness, called *Taqwā,* which ultimately insures that intentions remain pure.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also provided protection against the inevitable acts of *shirk* by teaching certain specific prayers which may be said anytime. Abu Mūsa said,

> "One day Allah's Messenger delivered a sermon, saying, 'O' people, fear *shirk* for it is more hidden than the creeping of an ant.' Those whom Allah wished asked, 'And how do we avoid it when it is more hidden than the creeping of an ant, O' Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'Say:
>
> اللّهُمَّ إنَّا نَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ نُشْرِكَ شَيْئاً نَعْلَمُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا لاَ نَعْلَمُهُ
>
> *'Allāhumma innā na'oodhu bika an nushrika shay'an na'lamuh, wa nastaghfiruka limā lā na'lamuh.'*
> (O' Allah, we seek refuge in You from knowingly committing *shirk* with You, and we ask Your forgiveness for what we do not know about)."[22]

In the following chapters a more detailed look will be taken at the most prominent areas in which *shirk* in all its three aspects most commonly occurs.

[22] Collected by Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarāni.

Chapter Three

ALLAH'S COVENANT WITH ADAM

The *Barzakh*

In Islam there is no support for the Hindu belief in reincarnation or the transmigration of souls wherein souls inhabit new bodies after bodily death.[1] Some of those who embrace this doctrine believe in a principle known as *Karma*,[2] that the deeds that a person accumulates in this life will determine the state in which he will be reborn. If he was bad, he is reborn in the womb of a woman from a lower level of society (caste) and he has to do good deeds so that he may be reborn on a higher level. If, on the other hand, he was good, he is reborn in the womb of a higher caste woman as a pious or holy man and continues to be reborn to successively higher caste women more pious and holy until he reaches perfection as a member of the *Brahmin* caste. When he becomes perfect, the cycle of rebirth ends with his soul dissolving

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[1] This belief has been adopted by some heretical *Isma'ilite Shi'ite* sects like the Druze of Lebanon and the *Nuṣayrites* (Alawites) of Syria. (See *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Pp. 94-5, 454-4).

[2] Karma primarily means action, work or deed. In its secondary sense it signifies the 'effect' of an action, or the sum total of 'effects' of past actions. Thus, it is stated in the Chandogya Upanishad (Veda) that those whose past deeds have been good will after death be reborn from the womb of a Brahman woman, whereas those whose deeds have been evil will be reborn from the womb of an outcaste woman (See. Dictionary of Religions, p.180).

and reuniting with the world soul, *Brahma*, in a process known as "*Nirvana*".

According to Islam and all divinely revealed religions, when a person dies on earth he will not be reborn until the Day of Resurrection. After the destruction of the world, all of mankind will rise up from the dead to be judged by Allah, the only God worthy of worship and the Greatest of Judges. From the time a man dies until he is resurrected, he remains in a suspended state known in Arabic as the '*Barzakh*'.[3] It should not seem strange to think that someone who died thousands of years ago may be waiting for thousands of years before finally being brought back to life, because the Prophet (ﷺ) had said that everyone's death is the beginning of his resurrection. Time only exists for those living on earth. Once a man dies, he leaves the time zone and a thousand years becomes a blinking of an eye. Allah illustrated that reality in a story which He related in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* about a man who doubted Allah's ability to resurrect a village; to bring it back to life after its death. So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years and when he was resurrected, questioned him as to how long he had "slept." He replied,

﴿... يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ... ﴿٢٥٩﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٥٩)

"... *A day or a part of a day...*" (Qur'an 2: 259)

Similarly, people who awaken from long comas often think that little or no time has passed. Often one sleeps for hours, yet on awakening he feels as though he had only just closed his eyes. So

[3] Lit. A partition. Allah said, ﴿[They will remain in falsehood] until when death comes to one of them, he will say, 'O' my Lord send me back that I may do the good deeds I neglected.' By no means! It is only words which he says. Behind them is a partition [*Barzakh*] until the day they are raised up.﴾ *(Qur'an 23: 99-100)*

there is no point in trying to imagine waiting for centuries in the *Barzakh*, because time in that state has no relevance.

Pre-Creation

Although Islam rejects the notion of the soul's continuous rebirth, it does, recognize that the soul of each child came into existence prior to its birth on earth.

The Prophet (ﷺ) related that,

> "When Allah created Adam, He took a covenant from him in a place called Na'mān on the day of *'Arafah*,[4] then He extracted from him all of his descendants who would be born until the end of the world, generation after generation, and spread them out in front of Him in order to take a covenant from them also. He spoke to them face to face saying: 'Am I not your Lord?' and they all replied, 'Yes, we testify to it.' Allah then explained why He had all of mankind bear witness that He was their creator and only true God worthy of worship. He said, 'That was in case you (mankind) should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Surely we were unaware of all this. We had no idea that You, Allah, were our God. No one told us that we were supposed to worship You alone." Allah went on to explain that it was also in case some people would say: 'It was our ancestors who made partners (with Allah) and we are only their descendants; will You, then destroy us for what those liars did?'[5] This was the

[4] The 9th of the 12th lunar month known as *Dhul-Ḥijjah*.

[5] *(Qur'an 7: 172-173)*. The hadith is from a *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) narration of Ibn 'Abbās collected by Aḥmad. See al-Albāni's *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah*,=

Prophet's explanation of the Qur'anic verse in which Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنۢ بَنِىٓ ءَادَمَ مِن ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰٓ
أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا۟ بَلَىٰ ۛ شَهِدْنَآ ۛ أَن تَقُولُوا۟ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَـٰمَةِ إِنَّا
كُنَّا عَنْ هَـٰذَا غَـٰفِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوٓا۟ إِنَّمَآ أَشْرَكَ ءَابَآؤُنَا مِن قَبْلُ
وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ۖ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ ٱلْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾﴾

(سورة الأعراف: ١٧٢-١٧٣)

"*When your Lord drew forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendant and made them testify concerning themselves, [saying]: 'Am I not your Lord?' they said, 'Yes, we testify to it.' [This] in case you say should say on the Day of Judgement, 'We were unaware of this.' Or in case you should say, 'It was our ancestors who made partners [with Allah] and we are only their descendants. Will you then destroy us for what those liars did?'*" (Qur'an 7: 172-173)

The verse and prophetic explanation confirm the fact that everyone is responsible for belief in God and on the Day of Judgement excuses will not be accepted. Every human being has the belief in God imprinted on his soul and Allah shows every idolator, during the course of his life, signs that his idol is not God. Hence, every sane human being is required to believe in God beyond His creation and not manifest in it.

The Prophet (ﷺ) then went on to say,

"Allah then placed between the two eyes of every human

=(Kuwait: ad-Dār as-Salafeeyah and Amman: al-Maktabah al-Islāmīyah, 2nd ed., 1983, vol. 4, p. 158, hadith no. 1623).

a flash of light showing their *Eemān* and showed them all to Adam. Adam was awed by the sight of all these countless numbers of beings with flashes of light between their eyes so he asked Allah, 'O' Lord, who are they?' Allah told him that they were all of his descendants. Adam then began looking closely at one whose flash of light amazed him, then he asked who he was and Allah said, 'That is a man called Dawūd from the last of the nations among your descendants.' Adam then asked how old he was and when Allah informed him that he was sixty, he said, 'O' Lord, increase his age by taking forty years from my age.' But when Adam's life span reached its end and the angel of death came, he said, 'Is there not forty more years of my life still remaining?' The Angel replied, 'Did you not give them to your descandant Dawūd?' Adam denied that he had done so and his descandants denied their promise to Allah. Adam later forgot his covenant to Allah and so did his descendants and they all fell into error."[6]

Adam ate from the forbidden tree due to his forgetting his promise to Allah and Satan's deceptive prodding, and most of mankind have ignored their responsibility to believe in God and worship Him alone, and have fallen into the worship of the creation.

Following that, the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

"Allah then pointed to some of the descendants that He had extracted from Adam and his children and said, 'I

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[6] From an authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) narration of Abu Hurayrah collected by Tirmidhi, see footnote 221, p. 241, of *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, (8th ed., 1984 edited by al-Albāni).

have created these people for Paradise and they will do the deeds of the people of Paradise.' He then pointed to the rest and said, 'I have created these people for the Hellfire and they will do the deeds of the inhabitants of Hell.' When the Prophet said that one of his Companions asked, 'O' Messenger of Allah, what then is the point of doing good deeds?' The Prophet replied, 'Verily, if Allah created one of His servants for Paradise, He helps him do the deeds of the people of Paradise until he dies doing one of their deeds; then He places him in Paradise because of it. But if He created a man for the Hell-fire, He helps him do the deeds of its inhabitants until he dies doing one of their deeds; then He puts him in the Fire because of it.' "[7]

This statement of the Prophet (ﷺ) does not mean that people have no free will or choice between good and evil, for if that were so, the Judgement, reward and punishment would all be senseless. Allah's creation of a person for Paradise simply means that Allah knows full well before his creation that such a person will be among the people of Paradise due to his choice of faith over disbelief and good over evil.

If someone sincerely believes in Allah and tries to do good, Allah will give him many opportunities to improve his belief and increase his good deeds. Allah will never cause sincere belief to be wasted even if the believer falls off the path, He will help him get back on it. Allah may punish him in this life when he goes off

[7] From an authentic narration of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1318, hadith no. 4686 and Tirmidhi and Aḥmad (See footnote 220, p. 240 of Shaykh al-Albāni's authentication of *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, 8th ed., 1984).

the right track to remind him of his errors and wake him up to make amends. In fact, Allah (ﷻ), will be so merciful as to take the life of the sincere believer while he is doing a good deed, thereby insuring that the believer will be among the fortunate dwellers of Paradise. If someone, on the other hand, disbelieves in Allah and rejects righteousness, Allah then makes evil deeds easy for him. Allah gives him success when he does bad and that encourages him to do more evil until he dies in such a sinful state and is flung into the everlasting Fire because of his evil deeds.

Man's natural disposition: The *Fiṭrah*

Since Allah made all human beings swear to His Godhood when He created Adam, this oath is printed on the human soul even before it enters the fetus in the fifth month of pregnancy. So when a child is born, it has with it a natural belief in Allah. This natural belief is called in Arabic the "*fiṭrah*".[8] If the child were left alone, it would grow up aware of Allah in His unity, but all children are affected by the pressures of their environment whether directly or indirectly.

The Prophet (ﷺ) reported that Allah (ﷻ) said,

> "I created My servants in the right religion but the devils made them go astray."[9]

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said,

> "Each child is born in a state of "*fiṭrah*", but his parents make him a Jew or a Christian. It is like the way an animal gives birth to a normal offspring. Have you

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[8] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, (8th ed., 1984, p. 245).

[9] Muslim (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1488, hadith no. 6853.

noticed any (young animal) born mutilated before you mutilate them?"[10]

So just as the child's body submits to the physical laws which Allah has put in nature, its soul also submits naturally to the fact that Allah is its Lord and Creator. But, its parents try to make it follow their own way and the child is not strong enough in the early stages of its life to resist or oppose its parents. The religion which the child follows at this stage is one of custom and upbringing, and Allah does not hold it to account or punish it for this religion. When the child matures in youth and clear proofs of the falsehood of its religion are brought to it, the adult must now follow the religion of knowledge and reason.[11] At this point the devils try their best to encourage him to stay as he is or to go further astray. Evils are made pleasing to him and he must now live in the midst of a struggle between his *fiṭrah* and his desires in order to find the right road. If he chooses his *fiṭrah,* Allah will help him overcome his desires, even though it may take most of his life to escape, for many people enter Islam in their old age, although most tend to do so before that.

Because of all these powerful forces fighting against the *fiṭrah,* Allah chose certain righteous men and revealed to them clearly the right path in life. These men, whom we call prophets, were sent to help our *fiṭrah* defeat its enemies. All the truths and good practices present in societies around the world today came from their teachings, and if it were not for their teachings, there would be no peace or safety in the world at all. For example, the laws of most Western countries are based on the "Ten

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[10] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1398, hadith no. 6423 and Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 8, Pp. 389-90, hadith no. 597.

[11] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, 5th ed., 1972, p. 273.

Commandments" of Prophet Moses (عليه السلام), such as "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt no kill," even though they claim to be "secular" governments, free from the influence of religion.

Thus, it is man's duty to follow the way of the Prophets since it is the only way which is truly in harmony with his nature. He should also be very careful not to do things simply because his parents and their parents did them, especially if knowledge reaches him that these practices are wrong. If he does not follow the truth, he will be like those misguided people about whom Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) says in the Qur'an,

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ٱتَّبِعُوا۟ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ قَالُوا۟ بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَآ أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ ءَابَآءَنَآ ۗ أَوَلَوْ كَانَ ءَابَآؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٧٠)

"*If they are told to follow what Allah has revealed, they say: 'No, we will continue to follow what we found our foreparents doing!' Even though their foreparents did not comprehend anything, nor were they rightly guided.*" (Qur'an 2: 170)

Indeed, Allah forbids us from obeying our parents if what they want us to do is against the way of the prophets. He (سبحانه وتعالى) said in the Qur'an,

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ بِوَٰلِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا ۖ وَإِن جَـٰهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِى مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَآ ... ﴿٨﴾﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: ٨)

"*We advise man to be good to his parents, but if they try to make you do in My name what you know to be false, do not obey them...*" (Qur'an 29: 8)

Born Muslim

Those who are fortunate to be born in Muslim families must be aware that all such "Muslims" are not automatically guaranteed Paradise, because the Prophet (ﷺ) warned that a large part of the Muslim nation would follow the Jews and Christians so closely that if they entered a lizard hole, Muslim would climb in after them.[12] He also said that before the Last Day some Muslims would actually worship idols.[13] All of these people will have Muslim names and consider themselves Muslims, but it will be of no benefit to them on the Day of Judgement. Today, there are Muslims all around the world praying to the dead, building tombs and *masjids* (mosques) over graves and even performing rites of worship around them. There are even some who claim to be Muslims and worship 'Ali as Allah.[14] Some have turned the Qur'an into a good luck charm which they hang on chains around their necks, in their cars or on key chains, etc. Therefore, those born into such a Muslim world who blindly follow whatever their parents did or believed have to stop and think whether they are simply Muslims by chance or Muslims by choice? Is Islam what their parents, tribe, country, or nation did or does, or is it what the Qur'an teaches and what the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) did?

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[12] Narrated by Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, Pp. 314-5, hadith no. 422 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 1403, hadith no. 6448.

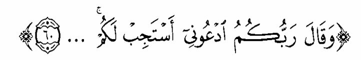
[13] Narrated by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, p. 178, hadith no. 232 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1506, hadith no. 6944-5.

[14] The *Nuṣayrees* of Syria and the Druzes of Palestine and Lebanon.

The Covenant

The covenant which every man made to Allah during pre-creation was that he would recognize Allah, the Almighty, as his Lord and not direct any form of worship to others besides Him. This is the essential meaning of the *shahādah* (declaration of faith) which everyone must make in order to become a full-fledged Muslim; *Lā ilāha illallāh* (There is no god but Allah) also known as *Kalimah at-Tawḥīd,* the statement of Allah's Unity. Bearing witness to God's unity in this life is only a confirmation of the primordial declaration made in the spiritual state. But the question which remains is: How is the covenant to be fulfilled?

The covenant is fulfilled by sincerely believing in *Tawḥīd* and putting that belief into practice in daily life. *Tawḥīd* is put into practice by avoiding all the acts of *shirk* (setting up partners with God) and by closely following the last messenger whom Allah sent as a practical and living example of life based on the principle of *Tawḥīd.* Because man has declared that Allah is his Lord, he must then consider righteous deeds to be only those defined by Allah and His Prophet (ﷺ) as being righteous, and evil deeds likewise. In so doing, the principle of *Tawḥīd* is put into practice mentally. This method is important because a deed may seem good when it is in fact evil. For example, it has been said that when a poor man wants a king to do something for him, it is better for the poor man to get a prince or someone near to the king to speak on his behalf. Based on that it is further said that if one really wants Allah to answer his prayers, he should pray to the Prophet or a saint to ask Allah on his behalf, since he is dirty with the many sins he commits daily. This may seem logical, but both Allah and His Prophet (ﷺ) have clearly told man to pray directly to Allah without any intermediaries. Allah has said in the Qur'an:



(سورة غافر: ٦٠)

"*And your Lord says*: '*Call on Me; I will answer your prayer.*'" (Qur'an 40: 60)

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "If you ask in prayer, ask only Allah; and if you seek help, seek it only from Allah."[15]

Likewise a deed may seem evil when it is in fact good. For example, some might point out that cutting off someone's hand for stealing is barbaric or that lashing someone for drinking alcohol is inhumane, and one might feel that such punishments are too harsh and not good; yet, Allah and His Prophet have prescribed these punishments, and the good results of their application speak for themselves. Therefore, the covenant with Allah can only be fulfilled by a Muslim by choice, regardless of whether his parents were Muslims or not, and the application of the covenant is, in fact, the implementation of the principles of Islam itself. Man's *fiṭrah* is the basis of Islam, so when he practices Islam in its totality, his outer actions and deeds come into harmony with the very nature which Allah created man's inner being. When this takes place, man unites his inner being with his outer being which is a key aspect of *Tawḥīd.* The result of this aspect of *Tawḥīd* is the creation of the truly pious man in the mold of Adam, to whom Allah made the angels bow and whom Allah chose to rule the earth. Because, only man who believes in *Tawḥīd* can judge and rule the earth with true justice.

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[15] Reported by Ibn 'Abbās and collected by Tirmidhi. See an-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith*, English Trans., p. 68.

Chapter Four

CHARMS AND OMENS

In the first chapter on *Tawḥīd*, *Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbīyah* (Unity of Lordship) was defined as the realization of Allah as Creator and Sustainer of the universe in all man's relations with Him. The creation, maintenance and eventual destruction of the universe and its contents are by Allah's command, and both good fortune and bad fortune occur according to Allah's will. However, man, during all ages, has asked the question, "Is there any way of knowing beforehand whether goodtimes or badtimes are coming?" For, if there is a way of knowing ahead of time, misfortune could then be avoided and success could be ensured. From the most ancient times, some individuals have falsely claimed access to his hidden knowledge and the ignorant masses of mankind have flocked around them, paying huge sums to gain pieces of this vital information. Some of the contrived methods for averting misfortune became common knowledge; and, thus, a profusion of good-luck charms like those mentioned in this chapter can be found in most societies. Some of the imagined secret ways of knowing one's fortune also became common knowledge, and thus various types of omens and their interpretation can be found in all civilizations. There is, however, a body of this knowledge which has remained secret, handed down from generation to generation, in the various forms of the occult arts of fortune-telling and magic.

It is very important that a clear Islamic concept of these practices be developed because of their widespread occurrence in human societies. Perhaps, even more important is the fact that, if they are not clearly understood, a Muslim could easily fall into the major sin of *shirk,* which is at the root of these practices. In the following four chapters, the Islamic position in relationship on these claims which contradict Allah's unique attributes (*Ṣifāt*) and promote the worship (*'Ibādah*) of creation will be looked at in greater detail. Each claim will be analyzed, based on the Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah, and an Islamic ruling will be placed on each of them as a guideline for those who honestly seek the reality of *Tawḥīd.*

Charms

It was the practice among the Arabs in the time of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) to wear arm bracelets, bangles, beaded necklaces, shells, etc., as charms to avert evil and bring good fortune. Talismans and amulets can also be found in all regions of the earth in a variety of forms. As was mentioned in previous chapters, faith in charms, amulets and talismans contradicts true belief in Allah's *Rubūbīyah* (Lordship) by attributing to created objects the power to avert evil and bring good fortune. Islam opposed all the manifestations of such beliefs which appeared in Arabia during the time of the last Prophet (ﷺ) in order to establish a foundation on the basis of which similar beliefs and practices would also be condemned and prohibited whenever and wherever they later appeared. Such beliefs, in fact, provide the ideological basis for idol worship in most pagan societies and the charms themselves represent a branch of idolatry. This relationship can easily be seen in the Catholic branch of Christianity, wherein Prophet Jesus is deified, his mother Mary and Saints are

worshipped, and pictures, statues, and medallions with their imagined likenesses are kept and worn for good fortune.

When people accepted Islam during the Prophet's time, they often carried with them faith in charms collectively known in Arabic as *tamā'im* (sing. *tamīmah*). Consequently, there are many recorded statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) in which he strictly forbade such practices. The following are only a few examples:

'Imrān ibn Ḥusayn reported,

> "When the Prophet saw a brass bangle on a man's upper arm, he said to him. 'Woe be on you! What is this?' The man replied that it was to protect him from a sickness called *al-Wāhinah*.[1] The Prophet then said, 'Cast it off, for verily it would only increase your weakness. And if you died with it on, you would never succeed.'"[2]

Thus, the wearing of copper, brass or iron bracelets, bangles, and rings by the sick or the healthy in the belief that they will avert or cure sicknesses is strictly forbidden. Such practices also fall under the prohibition against the treatment of sickness with *ḥarām* (forbidden) cures about which the Prophet (ﷺ) had said,

> "Treat each other's sicknesses, but do not treat sicknesses with forbidden things."[3]

Abu Wāqid al-Laythi also reported,

> "When Allah's Messenger set out for Ḥunayn,[4] they

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[1] Lit. Weakness. Possibly referring to Arthritis.

[2] Collected by Aḥmed, Ibn Mājah and Ibn Ḥibbān.

[3] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1087, hadith no. 3865 and al-Bayhaqi.

[4] The site of the last major battle between the Prophet (ﷺ) and Arabian pagan tribes which took place in the 10th year after the Hijrah.

passed by a tree called *Dhātu Anwāt*.[5] The idolaters used to hang their weapons on its branches for good fortune. Some of the *Ṣaḥābah* who were new in Islam asked the Prophet to designate a similar tree for them. The Prophet replied, '*Subhānallāh!* [6] This is just like what Prophet Moses' people said to him:

﴿... ٱجْعَل لَّنَآ إِلَٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ ءَالِهَةٌ ... ﴿١٣٨﴾﴾

(سورة الأعراف: ١٣٨)

"... *Make a god for us just like their gods!...*"

(Qur'an 7: 138)

By the One in whose hand rests my soul, all of you will follow the path of those before you."[7]

In this hadith, the Prophet (ﷺ) not only rejects the concept of good luck charms but he also prophesies that the Muslims will imitate the practices of the Christians and the Jews. *Dhikr* beads in common use among Muslims imitate the rosary of the Catholics; *Mawlid* (celebration of the Prophet's birthday) imitates Christmas; and the belief among many Muslims in saints and their intercession is no different in principle from that found in Christianity. The prophesy has already come true!

The Prophet (ﷺ) further emphasized the seriousness of wearing amulets by evoking Allah's curse on those who do so. 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) once said,

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[5] Lit. "that which has things hanging on it."

[6] May Allah be glorified.

[7] Collected by Tirmidhi, Nasā'i and Aḥmad. Authenticated by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Tirmidhi* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1st ed., 1988, vol. 2, p. 235, hadith no.1771).

"May Allah cause failure and unrest to whoever wears a talisman or puts it on others."[8]

The Prophet's Companions strictly followed his commands with regard to charms and amulets. Consequently, there are many recorded incidents in which they openly opposed such practices in the society as well as among their families whenever they appeared. 'Urwah reported that when the *Ṣaḥābi,* Ḥudhayfah (ﷺ), visited a sick man and saw a bracelet on the man's upper arm, he pulled it off and broke it. Ḥudhayfah then recited the verse,

﴿وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُم بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُم مُّشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾﴾

(سورة يُوسُف: ١٠٦)

"*Most of them who believe in Allah commit shirk.*"
(Qur'an 12: 106)[9]

On another occasion, he touched the upper arm of a sick man and discovered a *khayt* (cord bracelet) around it. When he asked the man what it was, the man replied, "It is something containing a spell made especially for me." Ḥudhayfah tore it off the man's arm and said, "If you had died with it on, I would never have made the funeral prayer for you!"[10] 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd's wife, Zaynab, reported that once when Ibn Mas'ūd saw a cord necklace around her neck and he asked what it was, she replied, "It is a cord in which a spell has been placed to help me." He snatched it from her neck, broke it up and said "Surely the family of 'Abdullah has no need for *shirk!* I have heard Allah's Messenger say,

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[8] Collected by Aḥmad and al-Ḥākim.

[9] Collected by Ibn Abi Ḥātim.

[10] Collected by Ibn Wakee'.

'Verily spells, talismans and charms are *shirk*.' "

Zaynab replied, 'Why are you saying this? My eye used to twitch, and when I went to so and so, the Jew, he put a spell on it and it stopped twitching!' Ibn Mas'ūd replied, 'Verily it was only a devil prodding it with his hand so when you had it bewitched he left it alone. It would have been sufficient for you to have said as the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say:

إذهب البأس رب الناس وأشف أنت الشافي لا شفاء إلا شفاءك،
شفاءاً لا يغادره سقما

Idhhabil-ba's Rabban-nās wa'shfi, a'nt ash-shāfee, lā shifā'a illā shifā'uk, shiffā'an lā yughādiruhu saqamā. (Remove the suffering, O' Lord of mankind, and heal it perfectly, as You are the true healer. There is no cure except Your cure, a cure which is not followed by sickness!)' "[11]

Ruling on charms

As was previously mentioned, the prohibition on amulets, talismans and charms is not limited to the Arabian forms opposed by the Prophet (ﷺ). Wherever objects are used for the same purpose, this prohibition also applies. The use of a variety of charms is widespread in Western society today in spite of its technological advancements and its scientific achievements.

[11] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1089, hadith no. 3874, Aḥmad, Ibn Mājah and Ibn Ḥibbān and authenticated by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abi Dawūd*, vol. 2, Pp. 736-7, hadith no. 3288. The *du'ā'* is also reported by both 'Ā'ishah and Anas and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, Pp. 427-8, hadith no. 5, 638-9 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1195, hadith no. 5434.

Many talismans have become so interwoven in every day life that few people stop to think about them; yet when their origins are exposed, the *shirk* which lies at their base becomes obvious. The following are only two examples of popular talismans in Western society:

The Rabbit's foot:

The hind paws of rabbits or gold and silver replicas of the hind paws are worn on chains and bracelets as good luck charms by millions in the West. The origin of this belief is based on the rabbit's habit of thumping their hind legs on the ground. According to the ancients, rabbits talked with the underground spirits when they thumped the ground. Hence, the paws were saved as a means of conveying one's wishes to the spirits as well as an instrument for bringing good luck in general.

Horseshoes:

Many houses in America have horseshoes nailed over their doors, miniature versions are also worn on charm bracelets, key chains or necklaces, in the belief that they will bring good luck. The origin of this belief can be found in ancient Greek mythology. In ancient Greece, horses were considered sacred animals. If a horse's shoe was hung over the door of a house, it was thought to bring good fortune. The open end of the horseshoe had to point upward, though, so it would hold the good luck. If it pointed downward, they believed that the good luck would spill out.

The belief in charms gives created things the divine power to avert misfortune, and thus, those who subscribe to such beliefs contend that Allah's *Rubūbīyah* (Lordship) is limited by His creation In fact, they consider the charms to be more powerful than Allah, because the charms are thought to be able to prevent misfortune which Allah has destined. Therefore, the belief in

charms is an obvious form of *shirk,* as Ibn Mas'ūd said in the previously mentioned hadith. This ruling is further strengthened by the following hadith. 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir reported that,

> "When a group of ten men came to the Prophet, he only accepted the oath of allegiance from nine. They asked, 'O' Messenger of Allah, why did you take the covenant from nine of us and refuse this man?' The Prophet answered, 'Verily he has a talisman on him.' The man then put his hand in his cloak, pulled out the talisman and broke it. When the Prophet finished taking the oath from him, he turned and said, 'Whoever wears a talisman has committed *shirk!*' "[12]

Qur'anic charms:

The *Ṣaḥābah,* including Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās and Ḥudhayfah (may Allah be pleased with them), were all opposed to the wearing of Qur'anic charms. Some scholars among the *tābi'ūn* (the Followers — students of the Prophet's Companions) allowed it, but most were against it. However, the texts of the hadiths forbidding talismans do not distinguish between charms containing Qur'an and those which do not. And, we have no record of the Prophet (ﷺ) wearing Qur'anic verses or allowing them to be worn. The wearing of Qur'anic charms also contradicts the prophetic method of breaking spells and averting evil. The Sunnah is to recite certain Qur'anic chapters (113 and 114) and verses (e.g., *Āyatul Kursi* 2: 255),[13] when evil approaches. The only prescribed method of gaining good fortune from the Qur'an

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[12] Collected by Tirmidhi and Aḥmad and authenticated by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah,* vol. 1, p. 261, hadith no. 492.

[13] Narrated by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 6, p. 491, hadith no. 530.

is also by its recitation and application. The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Whoever recites a letter from Allah's Book earns a good deed and each good deed is worth ten times its value. I am not saying that *alif lām meem* is one letter but that *alif* is a letter, *lām* is a letter and *meem* is a letter."[14]

Wearing the Qur'an in an amulet is like a sick man given a prescription by a doctor. Instead of reading it and getting the medicine, he rolls it into a ball, puts it in a pouch and hangs it around his neck, believing that it will make him well.

As long as one who wears a Qur'anic charm believes that it will avert evil and bring good fortune, he has given a part of creation the power to cancel what Allah has already destined. Consequently, he will depend on it instead of Allah. This is the essence of the *shirk* involving charms, as is evident from the following narration. 'Eesa ibn Hamzah said,

> "Once I came to visit 'Abdullah ibn 'Ukaym and found Hamzah with him. I asked 'Abdullah, 'Don't you wear a *tamīmah* (charm)?' He replied, 'May Allah give us refuge from that! Don't you know that Allah's Messenger said, 'Whoever wears a necklace or bracelet, depends on it.' "[15]

The practice of producing miniature Qur'ans so small as to be unreadable with the naked eye for the purpose of wearing in lockets invites to *shirk*. Similarly ornaments with *Āyatul-Kursi*

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[14] Collected by Aḥmad and al-Ḥākim and authenticated by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Tirmidhi*, vol. 3, p. 9, hadith no. 2327.

[15] Reported by Ibn Mas'ūd and collected by Aḥmad, Tirmidhi, and al-Ḥākim. It is rated as *ḥasan* by al-Arnā'oot in *Sharḥ as-Sunnah* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1st ed., 1978, vol. 12, p. 160-1, ftn. 5).

written in minute, virtually illegible, lettering and worn as pendants also encourage *shirk.* One who wears such ornaments merely for decoration does not commit *shirk,* but most who wear them do so for protection from evil, and as such fall into an aspect of *shirk* in the fundamental Islamic principle of *Tawḥīd.*

Muslims have to carefully avoid using the Qur'an as a goodluck charm. By hanging it in their cars, on key chains, bracelets, necklaces the way non-Muslims use their various amulets and talismans, they open the door to *shirk.* Thus, a conscious effort has to be made to purify one's belief of all that would detract from a pure conception of *Tawḥīd.*

Omens

Pre-Islamic Arabs used to consider the direction in which birds and animals moved to be a sign of impending good or bad fortune and would plan their lives around such signs. The practice of reading good and bad omens in bird and animal movements was referred to as *Ṭiyarah* from the verb *ṭāra* which means "to take flight." For example, if an individual set out on a journey and a bird flew over him and turned to the left, he would see in it a sign of impending bad fortune, turn around and return home. Islam invalidated these practices because they corrode the foundation of *Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah* and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt.*

1. By directing the form of worship known as "trust" (*tawakkul*) to other than Allah, and,

2. By attributing to man the power to predict the coming of good or evil, and the ability to avoid Allah destiny.

The basis on which the prohibition of *ṭiyarah* is established is the hadith of the Prophet's grandson, al-Ḥusain, in which he

reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Whoever does *ṭiyarah* or has it done for himself, has his future prophesied or has someone bewitched, is not one of us."[16]

"Us" here refers to the nation of Islam. Therefore, *ṭiyarah* is considered among the acts which puts one who believes in it outside the fold of Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) also negated the effects of *ṭiyarah* in another hadith reported by Mu'āwiyah ibn al-Ḥakam.

> Mu'āwiyah told the Prophet, "There are some among us who follow bird omens." The Prophet replied, "It is only something you made up by yourselves, so do not let it stop you."[17]

That is, do not let it stop you from doing what you want to do, since such omens are all fictitious concoctions of man's imagination which have no reality. Thus, Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) explained clearly that Allah, the All-Glorious, did not make the direction in which birds fly a sign of anything. No success or calamity which occurs is caused by their motion of flight or may be foretold by it, even if some events happen to coincide with pre-Islamic concepts about their motion.

The *Ṣaḥābah* — Companions of the Prophet, (may Allah be pleased with them all) strictly rejected all manifestations of the belief in bird omens whenever they found them expressed by their own companions and students. For example 'Ikrimah (رضي الله عنه) said, "Once when we were sitting with Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه), a bird flew over us and screeched. A man from among the group then

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[16] Collected by Tirmidhi.

[17] Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1209, hadith no. 5532.

exclaimed, "Good! Good!" Ibn 'Abbās reprimanded him saying, "There is neither good nor evil in it."[18] Similarly, the *Tābi'ūn* (the Followers — students of the *Ṣaḥābah*) also rejected all forms of belief in omens expressed by their own students from among the third generation of Muslims. For example, once a crow screeched while Ṭāwoos was on a journey with one of his friends and his companion said, "Good!" Ṭāwoos replied, "What is the good in that? Do not accompany me any further."[19]

There is, however, a statement attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari* [20] whose meaning is rather dubious:

> "Bad omens are in three things: women, riding animals, and houses."[21]

'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها) rejected this narration saying,

> "By the One who revealed the *Furqān* (Qur'an) to Abul-Qāsim[22] whoever relates it has lied. Allah's Messenger said that the people of ignorance used to say, 'Surely there are *ṭiyarah* (bad omens) in women, houses and beasts of burden.' Then she recited the verse:



(سورة الحديد: ٢٢)

"*No affliction strikes in the earth nor befalls you except according to what was written prior...*" (Qur'an 57: 22)"[23]

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[18] Quoted in *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 428.

[19] Ibid.

[20] The most authentic collection of hadiths (Prophetic traditions) by Imam Bukhari.

[21] Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, Pp. 447-8, hadith no. 666.

[22] Abul-Qāsim was the Prophet's pet name. The oath here means "by Allah."

[23] Collected by Aḥmad, al-Ḥākim and Ibn Khuzaymah.

The hadith, however, is sound, but should be interpreted according to another of its narrations which is more specific:

> "If there were to be bad omens, they would have been in horses, women and places of residence."[24]

Therefore, the Prophet (ﷺ) was not confirming the existence of bad omens; he was only pointing out the areas in which they would have been most likely to occur, if they were to be real. The reason why these three were specified was due to the frequency of occurrence of misfortune associated with them due to the fact that in those days they were the three most important things in a man's life. Consequently, the Prophet (ﷺ) prescribed certain prayers of refuge to be said when taking possession of them or entering them. The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "If any of you marries a woman or hires a servant he should take hold of her forelock, mention the name of Allah, pray for blessing, then say:
>
> اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ خَيْرَهَا وَخَيْرَ مَا جَبَلْتَهَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهَا وَشَرِّ مَا جَبَلْتَهَا عَلَيْهِ
>
> *Allāhumma innee as-aluka khayrahā wa khayra mā jabaltahā 'alayha wa a'oudhu bika min sharrihā wa sharri mā jabaltahā 'alayh.*
> (O' Allah, I ask You for the best of her and the best of what You have made a part of her nature. I also seek refuge in You from her evil and the evil You have made a part of her nature).

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[24] Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), p. 435, hadith no. 649, Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1208, hadith nos. 5528-9 and *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1099, hadith no. 3911.

If he buys a camel let him take hold of the upper-most part of its hump and say likewise."[25]

It is also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said that if any of us enters a house he should say:

أَعُوْذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّاتِ مِنْ شَرِّمَا خَلَقَ

A'oodhu bi kalimātillāhit-tāmmāti min sharri mā khalaq. (I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allah, from the evil which He has created)."[26]

The following is also another tradition which appears to support omens:

Anas ibn Mālik quoted Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd as saying that a women came to Allah's Messenger and said, "O' Messenger of Allah, there is a house whose inhabitants were many and their wealth was abundant. Then their numbers dwindled and the wealth disappeared. Can we leave it?" The Prophet replied, "Leave it, for it is cursed by Allah."[27]

The Prophet (ﷺ) informed them that leaving it was not a form of *ṭiyarah* since the place had become a burden on them psychologically due to misfortune and loneliness. This is a natural feeling which Allah has placed in man. Whenever man

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[25] Reported by 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb and collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 579, hadith no. 2155 and Ibn Mājah.

[26] Reported by Khawlah bint Ḥakeem and collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1421, hadith no. 6521.

[27] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, Pp. 1099-100, hadith no. 3913 and Mālik, Muhammad Raḥimuddeen, *Muwaṭṭa Imam Malik*, (Eng. Trans.), Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1980, p. 413, hadith no. 1758.

experiences evil or misfortune in or from a thing, he tends to dislike it and wants to get as far away from it as possible, even though the thing did not actually cause the misfortune. It should also be noted that this request took place after misfortune had afflicted them and not before. It is correct to refer to a place or people as being cursed by Allah due to the misfortune which befalls them. Cursed in the sense that they have been punished by Allah for some evil they have done. Likewise, man tends to love and want to be near whatever brings him good fortune and success. This feeling is not in itself *ṭiyarah*, although when it is misplaced it can lead to *ṭiyarah* and *shirk*. The transition takes place when an individual tries to avoid places and things in which others had misfortune, or when he tires to seek out those in which others had good fortune. He begins to attribute the good and bad fortune to the places and things themselves, and in time he may even perform certain acts of worship there.

Fāl (A good omen)

Anas reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "There is no contagion[28] nor *ṭiyarah*, but I like *Fāl*." The Companions then asked, "What then is *Fāl?*" He replied,

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[28] In another narration reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari and Muslim in which the Prophet denied the existence of contagion, a bedouin asked, "O' Messenger of Allah what about the case of a healthy herd of camels in the desert, when a diseased camel is brought among them and they all get sick because of it?" The Prophet replied "So who infected the first one?" Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, Pp. 411-2, hadith no. 612 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1206, hadith no. 5507, see also *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 3907. The Prophet here denies contagion based on pre-Islamic beliefs in which its cause was attributed to spirits and gods besides Allah.

"A good word."[29]

The recognition of bad omens in things indicates bad thoughts about Allah and the presence of ideas containing *shirk.* Although the belief in good omens tends to be more positive in its approach to Allah, it still involves the *shirk* of assigning divine powers to created things. This is why the *Ṣaḥābah* were very surprised when the Prophet expressed a liking for *fāl,* a good omen. The Prophet, however, defined for them the limited aspect of *fāl* which is Islamically acceptable. It is the use of optimistic terms. For example, nicknaming a sick person "*Sālim*" (well) or one who has lost something "*Wājid*" (finder). The use of these and similar terms revive hope and optimism in the unfortunate and produce feelings of well being. Believers are required to maintain optimism about Allah at all times.[30]

The Islamic ruling on omens

From the preceding hadiths it can clearly be seen that *ṭiyarah* refers to the general belief in omens. The principle of deriving fortune forecasts from bird movements has been rejected in its totality by the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). The ancient Arabs took their omens from birds and other nations take theirs from elsewhere, but, the principle involved is the same. Often when the origins of these omens are identified, the *shirk* in them becomes most obvious. The following are only a few of the countless omens presently observed in Western society.

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[29] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, hadith no. 436. hadith no. 651 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1208, hadith no. 5519. See also *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1098, hadith no. 3906.

[30] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, Pp. 434-5.

Knock on wood:

When someone is thankful for something and hopes that his luck will not change he says, "Knock on wood," and looks around for some wood to knock on. The origin of this belief goes back to the time when people in Europe thought that gods lived inside trees. To ask the tree-god a favour they would touch the tree. If the wish were granted they would touch the tree again to thank the god.

Spilling salt:

If salt is spilled, many believe that misfortune will shortly follow, so the spilled salt is thrown over the left shoulder to counteract it. The origin of this omen lies in the ability of salt to keep things fresh. This was believed by the ancients to be due to its magical powers. Thus, spilling salt became a warning of evil. Since evil spirits were thought to live on one's left side, throwing the spilled salt over the left shoulder was supposed to satisfy the evil spirits.

Breaking a mirror:

Many people believe that breaking a mirror accidentally is a sign of seven years of bad luck. Ancient people thought that their reflections in water were their souls. So if their reflections were shattered (e.g. if someone threw a pebble in the water), then their souls were also shattered. When mirrors were made this belief was transferred to them also.

Black cats:

The crossing of a black cat in front of one's path signals the coming of bad luck to many. This belief originated in the Middle Ages when people believed that black cats were witches pets. Witches were supposed to make magic brews by mixing the

brains of black cats with parts of toads, snakes and insects. If a witch's black cat lived for seven years without ending up in a brew, the cat was supposed to change into a witch.

The Number 13:

In America the number thirteen is considered unlucky and thus, in many of the apartment buildings the 13th floor is called the 14th. Friday the 13th is considered particularly unlucky and many people avoid travel or special engagements on this day. And if anything bad befalls them on that day, they immediately attribute it to the day itself. This phenomena is not restricted to the common people as some might mistakenly imagine. For example, the flight commander of the Apollo moonshot of 1970, which came near to disaster, explained on his return that he should have known that something was going to happen. When asked why, he replied that the flight took place on Friday the 13th, blast off was at 1300 hours (i.e. one o'clock), and the flight number was Apollo 13.

The origin of this belief goes back to the evening of Jesus' last supper as told in the Bible. At the Last Supper, there were 13 people. One of the 13 was Judas, the man who supposedly betrayed Jesus. Friday the 13th is supposed to be particularly unlucky for at least two reasons. First, Friday is the day Jesus was supposed to have been crucified. And, according to medieval belief, Friday is the day when witches held their meetings.

Allah's ability to cause good and bad fortune is being shared by His creation in these beliefs. Also, fear of misfortune and hope for good fortune, which should only be directed to Allah, is being directed to other than Allah. Knowledge of the future and the unseen is also being claimed, and this quality belongs only to Allah. Allah clearly pointed this out in His

attribute *'Ālim al-Ghayb,* 'Knower of the Unseen.' In the Qur'an Allah even asks the Prophet (ﷺ) to confess that had he known the unseen future, he would have avoided all misfortune.[31]

Therefore, the belief in omens can clearly be classified as an act of *shirk* in all of the major areas of *Tawḥīd.* This ruling is further substantiated by the hadith reported by Ibn Mas'ūd in which Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said,

> "*Ṭiyarah* is *shirk*! *Ṭiyarah* is *shirk*! *Ṭiyarah* is *shirk!*"[32]

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (رضي الله عنه) also related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Whoever is prevented from doing something by *ṭiyarah*, has committed *shirk.*" The Companions asked, "What is its atonement?" He replied, "Say:
>
> اَللَّهُمَّ لاَ خَيْرَ إِلاَّ خَيْرُكَ وَلاَ طَيْرَ إِلاَّ طَيْرُكَ وَلاَ إِلٰهَ غَيْرُكَ
>
> *Allāhumma lā khayra illā khayruka wa lā ṭayra illā ṭayruk wa lā elāha ghayruka.* (O' Allah, there is no good except Your good, nor birds except Yours, and there is no god beside You.)"[33]

From the preceding hadiths, it can clearly be seen that the *ṭiyarah* was not in any way limited to birds. It includes all forms of beliefs in omens. These beliefs vary in form from place to place and from time to time but they all have the same common denominator of *shirk.*

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[31] *(Qur'an 7: 188).*

[32] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, Pp. 1096-7, hadith no. 3901, Tirmidhi and Ibn Mājah.

[33] Collected by Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarāni.

Therefore, Muslims are obliged to carefully avoid all feelings which stem from these beliefs. If they find themselves unconsciously acting on the basis of these beliefs, they should seek refuge in Allah and say the previously mentioned *du'ā'* (supplication). This area may seem quite insignificant for so much fuss to be made about it. Islam, however, puts stress on this area because it represents the seed from which Major *shirk* may grow. The worship of idols, men, stars, etc., did not come about at one instant in time. Such practices of idolatry developed over long periods of time. Man's belief in Allah's unity, was gradually eroded as the seed of Major *shirk* took root and grew. Thus, Islam, by providing guidance in all aspects of humans life, tries to root out the evil seeds before they can take root and destroy the very foundation of a Muslim's belief.

Chapter Five

FORTUNETELLING

As was stated in the previous chapter, there are among mankind, people who claim knowledge of the unseen and the future. They are known by various names; fortuneteller, soothsayer, foreseer, augur, magician, prognosticator, oracle, astrologer, palmist, etc. Fortunetellers use various methods and mediums from which they claim to extract their information, among them: reading tea-leaves, drawing lines, writing numbers, palm-reading, casting horoscopes, crystal ball gazing, rattling bones, throwing sticks, etc. This chapter will deal with the various fortunetelling arts, with the exception of magic, which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Practitioners of occult arts which claim to reveal the unseen and predict the future can be divided into two main categories:

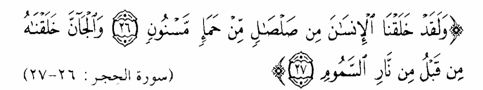
1. The first group are those who have no real knowledge or secrets but depend on telling their customers about general incidences which happen to most people. They often go through a series of meaningless rituals, then make calculated general guesses. Some of their guesses, due to their generality, usually come true. Most people tend to remember the few predictions that come true and quickly forget the many which do not. This tendency is a result of the fact that after some time all the predictions tend to become half-forgotten thoughts in the subconscious, until something happens to trigger their recall. For example, it has become a

common practice in North America to publish, at the beginning of each year, the various predictions of famous fortunetellers. When a survey was taken of the various predictions for the year 1980, it was found that the most accurate fortuneteller among them was only 24% accurate in her predictions!

2. The second group are those who have made contact with the *Jinn*. This group is of greater importance because it usally involves the grave sin of *shirk,* and those involved often tend to be highly accurate in their information and thus present a real *fitnah* (temptation) for both Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

World of the *Jinn*

Some people have attempted to deny the reality of the *Jinn* (sing. *Jinni*) about whom the Qur'an has devoted a whole chapter, *Sūrah al-Jinn*, (72). By relying on the literal meaning of the word *Jinn* which comes from the verb *janna, yajunnu,* "to cover, hide or conceal," they claim that the word *Jinn* really refers to "clever foreigners." Others have even stated that a *Jinn* is a human who does not have a true mind in his head but he has a fiery nature. But, the reality is that the *Jinn* represent another creation of Allah which co-exists with man on the earth. Allah created the *Jinn* before He created mankind, and He also used a different set of elements than those used for man. Allah (ﷻ) said:



"*Verily we created man from dried clay, from black putrid mud. And we created the Jinn* before that from a fiery wind." (Qur'an 15: 26-27)

They were named *Jinn* because they are hidden from the eyes of mankind. *Iblees* (Satan) is from the world of the *Jinn*, even though he was among the angels when they were commanded by Allah to prostrate to Adam. When he refused to do so and was asked why, Allah (ﷻ) said,

﴿قَالَ أَنَا۠ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُۥ مِن طِينٍ ۝٧٦﴾

(سورة صٓ: ٧٦)

"*He said, 'I am better than him. You [Allah] created me from fire and You created him from clay!*" (Qur'an 38: 76)

'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "The angels were created from light and the *Jinn* from smokeless fire."[1]

Allah (ﷻ) also said:

﴿وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ ٱسْجُدُوا۟ لِءَادَمَ فَسَجَدُوٓا۟ إِلَّآ إِبْلِيسَ كَانَ مِنَ ٱلْجِنِّ ... ۝٥٠﴾

(سورة الكهف: ٥٠)

"*And when We told the angels to prostrate to Adam, they all prostrated except Iblees. He was of the Jinn...*" (Qur'an 18: 50)

Therefore it is incorrect to consider him a fallen angel or the like.

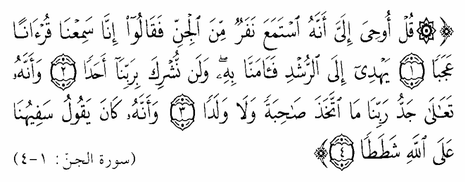
The *Jinn* may first be divided into three broad categories according to their modes of existence. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> "There are three types of *Jinn*: One type which flies in the air all the time, another type which exists as snakes and dogs, and an earthbound type which resides in one place

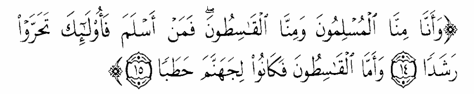
[1] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1540, hadith no. 7134.

or wanders about."[2]

The *Jinn* may be further divided into two categories according to their faith: Muslims (believers) and *kāfirs* (disbelievers). Allah refers to the believing *Jinn* in *Sūrah al-Jinn* as follows:



"*Say: It has been revealed to me that a group of Jinn listened and said, 'Verily we have heard a marvelous Qur'an. It guides unto righteousness, so we have believed in it. And, we will never make partners with our Lord. He, may our Lord's glory be exalted, has not taken a wife nor a son. What the foolish ones among us used to say about Allah is a horrible lie.'*" (Qur'an 72: 1-4)



"*And there are among us Muslims and others who are unjust. Whoever accepts Islam has sought out the right path. As for those who are unjust, they will be fuel for the Hell-fire.*" (Qur'an 72: 14-15)

The disbelievers among the *Jinn* are referred to by various names in both Arabic and English: *'Ifreet, Shayṭān, Qareen,*

[2] Collected by aṭ-Ṭabari and al-Ḥākim.

demons, devils, spirits, ghosts, etc. They try to misguide man in various ways. Whoever listens to them and becomes a worker for them is referred to as human *Shayṭān* (Devil). Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَٰطِينَ ٱلْإِنسِ وَٱلْجِنِّ ... ﴿١١٢﴾﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١١٢)

"*Likewise, We have made for every Prophet an enemy, Shayṭāns from among mankind and the Jinn...*"

(Qur'an 6: 112)

Every human has an individual *Jinn* accompanying him referred to as a *qareen* (i.e. companion). This is a part of man's test in this life. The *Jinn* encourage his lower desires and constantly try to divert him from righteousness. The Prophet (ﷺ) referred to this relationship as follows,

> "Everyone of you has been assigned a companion from the *Jinn.*" The *Ṣaḥābah* asked, "Even you, O' Messenger of Allah?" And the Prophet replied, "Even me, except that Allah has helped me against him and he has submitted, now he only tells me to do good."[3]

Prophet Sulaymān (Solomon) (ﷺ) was given miraculous control over the *Jinn,* as a sign of his prophethood. Allah said:

﴿وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَٰنَ جُنُودُهُۥ مِنَ ٱلْجِنِّ وَٱلْإِنسِ وَٱلطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾﴾ (سورة النمل: ١٧)

"*And we gathered for Sulaymān his army from the Jinn, mankind and the birds, and they were all kept in order and ranks.*" (Qur'an 27: 17)

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[3] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1472, hadith no. 6757.

But this power was not given to anyone else. No one else is allowed to control the *Jinn* and no one can. The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Verily an *'Ifreet* [4] from among the *Jinn* spat on me last night trying to break my *ṣalāh*. However Allah let me overpower him and I wanted to tie him to one of the columns in the *masjid* so that you all could see him in the morning. Then, I remembered my brother Sulaymān's (Solomon) prayer:
>
> ﴿قَالَ رَبِّ ٱغْفِرْ لِى وَهَبْ لِى مُلْكًا لَّا يَنۢبَغِى لِأَحَدٍ مِّنۢ بَعْدِىٓ ... ﴿٣٥﴾﴾ (سورة صٓ: ٣٥)
>
> "*O' my Lord, forgive me and bestow on me a kingdom not allowed to anyone after me...*" (Qur'an 38: 35)"[5]

Man cannot gain control over the *Jinn* as this was a special miracle given only to Prophet Sulaymān (ﷺ). In fact, contact with the *Jinn* in circumstances other than possession, or accident is most often made by the performance of sacrilegious acts despised and forbidden in the religion.[6] The evil *Jinn* summoned in this fashion may aid their partners in sin and disbelief in God. Their goal is to draw as many others as they can into the gravest of sins, the worship of others besides or along with God.

Once contact and contract with the *Jinn* are made by fortunetellers, the *Jinn* may inform them of certain events in the future. The Prophet (ﷺ) described how the *Jinn* gather

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[4] A strong or powerful evil *Jinn* (E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Cambridge, England: Islamic Texts Society, 1984, vol. 2, p. 2089).

[5] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 1, p. 268, hadith no. 75 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 273, hadith no. 1104.

[6] Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, *Ibn Taymiyah's Essay on the Jinn*, (Riyadh: Tawḥīd Publication, 1989, p. 21).

information about the future. He related that the *Jinn* were able to travel to the lower reaches of the heavens and listen in on some of the information about the future which the angels pass among themselves. They would then return to the earth and feed the information to their human contacts.[7] This used to happen a lot prior to the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ) and fortunetellers were very accurate in their information. They were able to gain position in the royal courts and enjoyed much popularity and were even worshipped in some regions of the world.

After the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) began his mission the situation changed. Allah had the angels guard the lower reaches of the heavens carefully, and most of the *Jinn* were chased away with meteors and shooting stars. Allah described this phenomenon in the following Qur'anic statement made by one of the *Jinn:*

﴿وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا ٱلسَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدْنَٰهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهُبًا ﴿٨﴾ وَأَنَّا
كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَٰعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَن يَسْتَمِعِ ٱلْءَانَ يَجِدْ لَهُۥ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا
﴿٩﴾﴾ (سورة الجن: ٨-٩)

"*We [the Jinn] had sought out the heavens but found it filled with strong guardians and meteors. We used to sit on high places in order to listen, but whoever listens now finds a flame waiting for him.*" (Qur'an 72: 8-9)

Allah (ﷻ) also said,

﴿وَحَفِظْنَٰهَا مِن كُلِّ شَيْطَٰنٍ رَّجِيمٍ ﴿١٧﴾ إِلَّا مَنِ ٱسْتَرَقَ ٱلسَّمْعَ فَأَتْبَعَهُۥ
شِهَابٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾﴾ (سورة الحجر: ١٧-١٨)

"*And We have guarded it [the heavens] from every*

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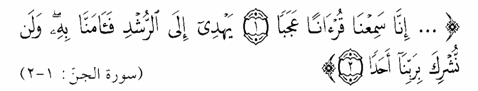
[7] Bukhari and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1210, hadith no. 5538.

cursed devil, except one who is able to snatch a hearing, and he is pursued by a brightly burning flame."

(Qur'an 15: 17-18)

Ibn 'Abbās (ﷺ) said,

> "When the Prophet (ﷺ) and a group of his Companions set out for the 'Ukādh market, the devils were blocked from hearing information in the heavens. Meteors were let loose on them, so they returned to their people. When their people asked what had happened, they told them. Some suggested that something must have happened, so they spread out over the earth seeking the cause. Some of them came across the Prophet and his Companions while they were in *Ṣalāh* (Prayer) and they heard the Qur'an. They said to themselves that this must have been what blocked them for listening. When they returned to their people, they told them,



"*Verily we have heard a marvelous Qur'an. It guides unto righteousness, so we believed in it. and we will never make partners with out Lord.*" (Qur'an 72: 1-2)"[8]

Thus, the *Jinn* could no longer gather information about the future as easily as they could before the Prophet's mission. Because of that, they now mix their information with many lies. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

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[8] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 6, Pp. 415-6, hadith no. 443 Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, Pp. 243-4, hadith no. 908, Tirmidhi and Aḥmad.

> "They (the *Jinn*) would pass the information back down until it reaches the lips of a magician or fortuneteller. Sometimes a meteor would overtake them before they could pass it on. If they passed it on before being struck, they would add to it a hundred lies."[9]

'Ā'ishah (ﷺ) reported that when she asked Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) about fortunetellers, he replied that they were nothing. She then mentioned that the fortunetellers sometimes told them things which were true. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> "That is a bit of truth which the *Jinn* steals and cackles in the ear of his friend; but he mixes along with it a hundred lies."[10]

Once while 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ﷺ) was sitting, a handsome man[11] passed by him. 'Umar said:

"If I am not wrong this person is still following his religion of pre-Islamic times or perhaps he was one of their fortunetellers." He ordered that the man be brought to him and asked him about what he suspected. The man replied, "I have never seen a day like this where a Muslim is faced with such accusations." 'Umar said, "Verily I am determined that you should inform me." The man then said, "I was their fortuneteller in the time of ignorance." On hearing that 'Umar asked, "Tell me about the strangest thing which your female *Jinn* told you." The man then said, "One day, while I was in the market, she came to me all worried and said, 'Have you not seen the *Jinn*, in their despair after their disgrace?

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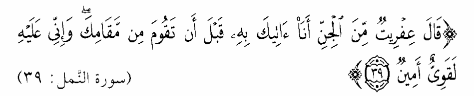
[9] Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 8, p. 150, hadith no. 232 and Tirmidhi.

[10] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, p. 439, hadith no. 657 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1209, hadith no. 5535.

[11] His name was Sawād ibn Qārib.

And their following of she-camels and their riders?"[12] 'Umar interjected, "It is true."[13]

The *Jinn* is also able to inform their human contact of the relative future. For example, when someone comes to a fortuneteller, the fortuneteller's *Jinn* gets information from the man's *Qareen* [14] of what plans he had made prior to his coming. So the fortuneteller is able to tell him that he will do this or that, or go here or there. By this method, the real fortuneteller is also able to learn about a stranger's past in vivid detail. He is able to tell a total stranger of his parents' names, where he was born, the acts of his childhood, etc. The ability to vividly describe the past is one of the marks of a true fortuneteller who has made contact with the *Jinn.* Because the *Jinn* are able to traverse huge distances instantaneously, they are also able to gather huge stores of information about hidden things, lost articles and unobserved events. Proof of this ability can be found in the Qur'an, in the story about Prophet Sulaymān (Solomon) (ﷺ) and Bilqees, the Queen of Sheba. When Queen Bilqees came to see him, he asked the *Jinn* to bring her throne from her land.



(سورة النمل : ٣٩)

"*An 'ifreet from among the Jinn said, 'I will bring it for you before you can get up from your place. Verily, I am strong and trustworthy for the assignment.'*"

(Qur'an 27: 39)

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[12] After the *Jinn* were prevented from eavesdropping on the angels, they had to follow the Arabs to find out why they were prevented.

[13] Collected by Bukhari. (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 5, Pp. 131-2, hadith no. 206.

[14] The *Jinn* assigned to every human being.

The Islamic ruling on fortunetelling

Because of the sacrilege and heresy involved in fortunetelling, Islam has taken a very strong stance towards it. Islam opposes any form of association with those who practice fortunetelling, except to advise them to give up their forbidden practices.

Visitation of fortunetellers

The Prophet (ﷺ) laid down principles which clearly forbade any form of visitation of fortunetellers. Ṣafiyah reported from Ḥafṣah (رضي الله عنها) (wife of the Prophet) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "The *Ṣalāh* (Prayer) of whoever approaches a fortuneteller and asks him about anything will not be accepted for 40 days and nights."[15]

The punishment in this hadith is for simply approaching a fortuneteller and asking him questions out of curiosity. This prohibition is further supported by Mu'āwiyah ibn al-Ḥakam as-Salamee's hadith in which he said,

> "O' Messenger of Allah, verily there are some people among us who visit oracles." The Prophet replied, "Do not go to them."[16]

Such a severe punishment has been assigned for only visitation because it is the first step to belief in fortunetelling. If one went there doubtful about its reality, and some of the fortuneteller's predictions come true, one will surely become a true devotee of the fortuneteller and an ardent believer in fortunetelling.

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[15] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1211, hadith no. 5540.

[16] Ibid., vol. 4, p. 1209, hadith no. 5532.

The individual who approaches a fortuneteller is still obliged to make his compulsory *Ṣalāh* throughout the 40 day period, even though he gets no reward from his prayer. If he abandons the *Ṣalāh* all together, he has committed another major sin. This is similar to the Islamic ruling in the case of *Ṣalāh* on or in stolen property, according to the majority of jurists. They hold that whenever obligatory *Ṣalāh* is performed, it produces two results under normal circumstances:

1. It removes the obligation of that prayer from the individual.
2. It earns him a reward.

If *Ṣalāh* is performed on or in stolen property it removes the obligation of *Ṣalāh*, but it is devoid of reward.[17] Consequently, the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade praying the same obligatory prayers twice.

Belief in fortunetellers

The Islamic ruling with regard to anyone who visits a fortuneteller believing that he knows the unseen and the future is that of *kufr* (disbelief). Abu Huraryrah and al-Ḥasan both reported from the Prophet (ﷺ) that he said,

> "Whosoever approaches a fortuneteller and believes what he says, has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad."[18]

Such a belief assigns to creation some of Allah's attributes with regard to the knowledge of the unseen and the future. Consequently, it destroys *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt,* and

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[17] Quoted from an-Nawawi in *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 407.

[18] Collected by Aḥmad, Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trnas.), vol. 3, p. 1095, hadith no. 3895 and al-Bayhaqi.

represents a form of *Shirk* in this aspect of *Tawḥīd.*

The ruling of *kufr* includes, by analogy (*qiyās*), those who read the books and writings of fortunetellers, listen to them on the radio or watch them on T.V., as these are the most common means used by 20th century fortunetellers to spread their predictions.

Allah clearly states in the Qur'an that no one knows the unseen besides Him, not even the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿۞ وَعِندَهُۥ مَفَاتِحُ ٱلْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ إِلَّا هُوَ ... ﴿٥٩﴾﴾

(سورة الأنعام: ٥٩)

"*With Him are the keys to the unseen, and none knows it [the unseen] except Him alone...*" (Qur'an 6: 59)

Then He (ﷻ) told the Prophet (ﷺ),

﴿قُل لَّآ أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِى نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنتُ أَعْلَمُ ٱلْغَيْبَ لَٱسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ ٱلْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِىَ ٱلسُّوٓءُ ... ﴿١٨٨﴾﴾

(سورة الأعراف: ١٨٨)

"*Say: 'I have no power to bring good to myself not avert harm but it is only as Allah wills. If it were that I knew the unseen, I would have multiplied the good and no evil would have touched me...'*" (Qur'an 7: 188)

And He (ﷻ) also said:

﴿قُل لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَن فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ٱلْغَيْبَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ ... ﴿٦٥﴾﴾

(سورة النمل: ٦٥)

"*Say: 'None in the heavens nor the earth knows the unseen except Allah...'*" (Qur'an 27: 65)

Therefore, all the various methods used around the world by oracles, fortuneteller, and the like are forbidden to Muslims. Palm-reading, I-Ching, fortune cookies, tea leaves, as well as Zodiacal signs and Bio-rhythm computer programmes all claim to inform those who believe in them about their future. However, Allah has stated in no uncertain terms that He alone knows the future:

﴿إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عِندَهُۥ عِلْمُ ٱلسَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ ٱلْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى ٱلْأَرْحَامِ ۖ وَمَا تَدْرِى نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا ۖ وَمَا تَدْرِى نَفْسٌۢ بِأَىِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌۢ ﴿٣٤﴾﴾ (سورة لقمان: ٣٤)

"*Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah alone. It is He who sends down the rain and knows the contents of the wombs. No one knows what he will earn tomorrow nor in which land he will die, but Allah is all-knowing and aware.*" (Qur'an 31: 34)

Therefore, Muslims must take utmost care in dealing with books, magazines, newspapers as well as individuals who, in one way or another, claim knowledge of the future or the unseen. For example, when a Muslim weather-man predicts rain, snow, or other climatic conditions for tomorrow he should add the phrase *insha' Allāh* (if Allah so wishes). Likewise, when the Muslim doctor informs her patient that she will deliver a child in nine months or on such and such a day, she should take care to add the phrase *insha' Allāh,* as such statements are only estimations based on statistical information.

Chapter Six

ASTROLOGY

Muslim scholars of the past referred to the field of star and planetary calculations collectively as *Tanjeem,* and they divided it into three main categories for the purpose of analysis and classification according to Islamic law.

1. The first category represents the belief that earthly beings are influenced by heavenly bodies and future events may be forecasted by the observation of the movement of these bodies.[1]

This belief, which came to be known as astrology, originated, as far as can be determined, in Mesopotamia in the 3rd millennium B.C., and attained full development within the orbit of Greek civilization. And older Mesopotamian form also reached India and China by the 6th century B.C., although only the prediction of the future by stars was adopted in China. In Mesopotamia, astrology was a royal institution in which omens concerning the welfare of the king and his country were drawn from signs in the sky. The underlying belief in Mesopotamia was that the heavenly bodies were powerful gods. When these astral-gods were introduced to Greece in the 4th century B.C., it became a source for Greek planetary lore. In Greece, astrology as a "science" for determining the future became accessible to those outside the

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[1] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 441.

royal court who could afford it.[2]

For over two thousand years, astrology exacted dominant influence on the religion, philosophy, and science of pagan, and then Christian Europe. Both Dante and St. Thomas Aquinas of 13th century Europe accepted astrological causation in their respective philosophies. This belief was also held by the Sabians to whom the Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) (ﷺ) was sent. The Sabians deified the sun, moon, and the stars and prostrated to them. They also built special places of worship in which statues and pictures representing the heavenly bodies were placed. It was their belief that the spirits of the heavenly bodies descended into the idols, communicated with them and fulfilled the needs of the people.[3] This form of astrology is considered *kufr* (disbelief) because it destroys *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* (the unity of Allah's names and attributes). Such beliefs give the planets, stars and the galaxies some of God's unique qualities, the most prominent among them being control over destiny (*Qadar*). Those who practice astrology are also in *kufr* because they claim knowledge of the future which is only known to Allah. By attributing to themselves some of Allah's divine qualities of knowledge, they falsely offer those who believe in them an opportunity to avoid harm that Allah has destined for them and to gain good that Allah has not destined for them. Astrology is also classified as *ḥarām* (forbidden) based on the hadith of Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه) in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Whoever acquires knowledge of any branch of astrology, has acquired knowledge of a branch of

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[2] William D. Halsey (ed.), *Collier's Encyclopedia*, (USA: Crowell-Collier Educational Corporation, 1970, vol. 3, p. 103).

[3] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 441.

magic. The more he increases in that knowledge, the more he increases in sin."[4]

2. The second category represents those who claim that Allah has willed that the movement and configurations of heavenly bodies indicate the occurrence of earthly events.[5] This was the stated belief of Muslim astrologers who learned and practiced the Babylonian science astrology. Astrology was introduced into the royal court by the later Umayyad caliphs, as well as the early 'Abbāsids. Each caliph used to have by his side a court astrologer, who would advise him on his day to day affairs and warn him of impending dangers. Because astrology in its original form was known by the masses of Muslims to be *kufr,* a compromise was made by those Muslims who wished to practice it, in order to make it appear acceptable Islamically. Consequently, astrological predictions were attributed to Allah's will. However, this form is also *ḥarām* (forbidden) and its practitioner should also be considered a *kāfir* (disbeliever), as there is no real difference in essence between this belief and that of the pagans. Allah's powers are given to the heavenly bodies, and those who claim to interpret their formations claim knowledge of the future which only belongs to Allah. However, some latter day scholars have become lax in the application of divine law and have allowed this form of astrology due to the fact that it has become a widely accepted belief among many Muslims.

3. The third and final category is the use of star formations by sailors or desert travellers in order to determine directions or by farmers to determine the arrival of the seasons in order that they

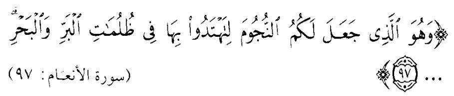
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[4] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1095, hadith no. 3986 and Ibn Mājah.

[5] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 442.

may know when to plant crops, etc.[6] These and similar practical uses represent the only aspect of astrology which is *ḥalāl* to Muslims according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The basis for this exception is the following Qur'anic verse:



"*He is the One who made the stars as guidance for you in the darkness of the land and the sea...*" (Qur'an 6: 97)

Bukhari related the following statement from Qatādah:[7]

"Verily Allah made the stars for directional guidance and for stoning the devils. So, whoever seeks anything beyond that from the stars has wildly speculated. He has missed his lot, lost his share of the good life, and has taken upon himself what he has no knowledge of. Verily those who do so are a people ignorant of Allah's commands. They have invented divination by the stars, claiming that whoever marries by such and such a star, this or that will happen, and whoever travels by such and such a star will find this or that. By my life, under every star is born a red, black, tall, short, ugly, and handsome animal. But neither the stars, animals nor birds know anything of the unseen. Allah would have taught it to Adam, if He were to teach it to anyone. He created him with His own hands, made the angels bow to him, and taught him the names of all things."

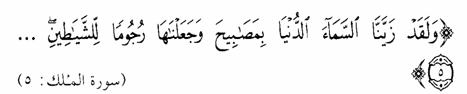
The limitations set by Qatādah on the use of stars was based on verse 98 of *Sūrah al-An'ām*, mentioned previously. It was also

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[6] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, Pp. 447-8.

[7] A leading scholar among those who studied under the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all).

based on the following verse:



"*Verily We have beautified the earthly skies with lamps and used them for the stoning of the devils...*"

(Qur'an 67: 5)

The Prophet (ﷺ) explained that the *Jinn* would sometimes journey up to the lower skies and eavesdrop on the angels as they discussed among themselves various events which were to happen in the world. The *Jinn* would later return to the earth and inform those involved in predicting the future. He also explained that Allah uses the falling stars (meteorites) as a means of driving away the *Jinn* and preventing most of them from eavesdropping except on rare occasions. Consequently, the Prophet (ﷺ) said that the predictions of the fortunetellers are a mixture of a few truths among hundreds of lies.[8] Muslims are therefore obliged to refrain from using the stars for purposes other than those clearly defined by Allah, or ones which are related to them.

Arguments of Muslim astrologists

Muslims involved in astrology have tried to utilize some verses of the Qur'an to support and justify their practices. For example, in recent times, *Sūrah al-Burooj* has been translated into English as "the Zodiacal Signs,"[9] and its first verses as a divine

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[8] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, p. 439, hadith no. 657 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1209, hadith no. 5535.

[9] A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, (Trans., Beirut: Dār al-Qur'an al-Karīm), p. 1714.

oath "By the Zodiacal Signs." This is of course an incorrect and misleading translation of the word *Burooj.* The word really means "star configurations" and not the "zodiacal signs." The zodiacal signs are only animal representations transposed by the ancient Babylonians and Greeks on existing stellar configurations. Therefore, this verse can in no way be used to support the heathen practice of star worship. The pictorial representations have no relationship to the configurations of the stars. Not only this, but the movement of the stars through space will cause the existing star configurations to change radically as time goes on.

In earlier times, the following verse from *Sūrah an-Naḥl* was used to justify astrology in the courts of the caliphs:

﴿وَعَلَٰمَٰتٍۚ وَبِٱلنَّجۡمِ هُمۡ يَهۡتَدُونَ ١٦﴾ (سورة النحل: ١٦)

"*And signs and with the stars they are rightly guided.*"
(Qur'an 16: 16)

"Muslim" astrologers claimed that this verse meant that the stars are signs revealing the unseen and by this knowledge people may be guided in their future.[10] However, Ibn 'Abbās, whom the Prophet (ﷺ) called *Turjumān al-Qur'an* (the translator of the Qur'an's meanings), said the "signs" mentioned in this verse meant roadsigns or landmarks in the daylight hours. They were not in reference to the stars at all. And he went on to say that "with the stars they are rightly guided" meant, that they are guided by them at night during their travels on the sea and land."[11] In other words, the meaning of this verse is the same as that of verse 98 of *Sūrah al-An'ām.*

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[10] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 444.

[11] Collected by Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabari in his *Tafsīr, Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'an*, (Egypt: al-Halabi Publishing, 3rd Edition, 1968, vol. 14, p. 91).

In any case, the use of these or other verses of the Qur'an to support the study and application of astrological pseudo-sciences, is totally invalid. It contradicts numerous other Qur'anic verses which maintain that Allah alone knows the future, and it also contradicts many hadiths which clearly oppose the learning and belief in astrology and related pseudo-sciences.

For example, the Prophet's Companion Ibn 'Abbās (ﷺ) reported that he (ﷺ) said,

> "Whoever learns a branch of stellar sciences, has learned a branch of magic."[12]

Abu Mahjam also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "What I fear the most for my nation after my time is: the injustice of their leaders, the belief in the stars and the denial of divine destiny."[13]

Therefore, there really is no basis in Islam for the belief in or practice of astrology. Whoever tries to bend the words of the religious texts to suit their own twisted desires is in fact doing as the Jews did. They took verses of the Torah out of context, and changed the meanings of the words knowingly.[14]

The Islamic ruling on horoscopes

Not only in the practice of astrology *ḥarām* as mentioned earlier, but visiting an astrologist and listening to his predictions,

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[12] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1095, hadith no. 3896 and Ibn Mājah.

[13] Collected by Ibn 'Asākir and authenticated by aṣ-Ṣuyūti (Quoted in *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 445).

[14] See *Sūrahs an-Nisā'* 4: 47 and *al-Mā'idah*, 5: 13 and 41.

buying books on astrology or reading one's horoscope are also forbidden! Since astrology is mainly used for predicting the future, those who practice it are considered fortunetellers. Consequently, one who seeks his horoscope comes under the ruling contained in the Prophet's statement:

> "The *Ṣalāh* of whoever approaches a fortuneteller and asks him about anything will not be accepted for forty days and nights."[15]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the punishment in this hadith is simply for approaching and asking the astrologist even if one is in doubt about the truth of his statements. If one is in doubt about the truth or falsehood of astrological information, he is in doubt about whether or not others know the unseen and the future besides Allah. This is a form of *shirk* because Allah has clearly stated:

﴿ وَعِندَهُۥ مَفَاتِحُ ٱلْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ إِلَّا هُوَ ... ﴾

(سورة الأنعام: ٥٩)

"*With Him are the keys to the unseen and none knows [the unseen] it except Him...*" (Qur'an 6: 59)

﴿ قُل لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَن فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ٱلْغَيْبَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ ... ﴾

(سورة النمل: ٦٥)

"*Say: 'None in the heavens or earth knows the unseen except Allah...'*" (Qur'an 27: 65)

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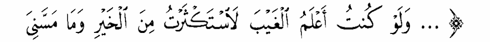
[15] Reported by Ḥafṣah and collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trnas.). vol. 4, p. 1211, hadith no. 5540.

If, however, one believes in the predictions of his horoscope, whether spoken by an astrologist or written in books of astrology, he falls directly into *kufr* (disbelief), as stated by the Prophet (ﷺ):

> "Whoever approaches an oracle or fortuneteller and believes in what he says, has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad."[16]

Like the previous hadith, this literally refers to the fortuneteller, but it is just as applicable to the astrologist. Both claim knowledge of the future. The astrologist's claim is just as opposed to *Tawḥīd* as the ordinary fortuneteller. He claims that people's personalities are determined by the stars, and their future actions and the events of their lives are written in the stars. The ordinary fortuneteller claims that the formation of tea leaves at the bottom of a cup, or lines in a palm tell him the same thing. In both cases individuals claim the ability to read in the physical formation of created objects, knowledge of the unseen.

Belief in astrology and the casting of horoscopes are in clear opposition to the letter and spirit of Islam. It is really the empty soul, which has not tasted real *Eemān* (belief), that seeks out these paths. Essentially these paths, represent a vain attempt to escape *Qadar* (fate). The ignorant believe that if they know what is in store for them tomorrow, they can prepare from today. In that way they may avoid the bad and ensure the good. However, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) himself was told by Allah (ﷻ) to say:



﴿ ... وَلَوْ كُنتُ أَعْلَمُ ٱلْغَيْبَ لَٱسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ ٱلْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ

[16] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Aḥmad and Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1095, hadith no. 3895.

﴿ ... ٱلسُّوٓءُ إِنۡ أَنَا۠ إِلَّا نَذِيرٞ وَبَشِيرٞ لِّقَوۡمٖ يُؤۡمِنُونَ ١٨٨ ﴾

(سورة الأعراف: ١٨٨)

"... *If I knew the unseen, I would surely have only sought the good. But, I am only a warner and a bearer of glad tidings for believers.*" (Qur'an 7: 188)

True Muslims are therefore obliged to stay far away from these areas. Thus, rings, chains and the like that have the signs of the Zodiac on them should not be worn, even if one does not believe in them. They are part and parcel of a fabricated system which propagates *kufr* and should be done away with entirely. No believing Muslim should ask another what his sign is, or attempt to guess his sign. Nor should he or she read horoscope columns in newspapers of listen to them read. And, any Muslim who allows astrological predictions to determine his actions, should seek Allah's forgiveness and renew his Islam.

Chapter Seven

MAGIC

Magic may be defined as the seeming control or foresight of natural forces by ritual invocation of supernatural agencies, as well as the belief that men can coerce nature by the use of certain rites, formulas, and actions.[1] The study of natural phenomena, traditionally called "white" or "natural magic", in Western society developed into what is now known as modern natural science. Distinguished from this was "black magic" or sorcery, the attempt to use or invoke supernatural powers for personal or sinister purposes. The terms witchcraft, divination and necromancy are among the terminologies most commonly used in reference to magic and its practitioners. Witchcraft was defined as sorcery practiced by a woman possessed by a demon. Divination referred to the attempt to gain supernatural insight into the future while necromancy or communication with the dead, was one of the methods of divination.

In Arabic, however, the term "*Siḥr*" (magic) makes no distinction between the branches of magic. Thus, it includes sorcery, witchcraft, divination and necromancy. *Siḥr* is defined in Arabic as whatever is caused by hidden or subtle forces.[2] For

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[1] *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*, (New York: Fund & Wagnalls Publishing Co., 10th ed., 1975, p. 813).

[2] *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, Pp .1316-7.

example, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported in a hadith to have said,

"Verily some forms of speech are magic."[3]

An eloquent charismatic speaker can make right seem wrong and vice versa. Thus, the Prophet (ﷺ) referred to some aspects of it as being magical. The pre-dawn meal taken before fasting is called *Saḥūr*[4] (from the root *Siḥr*) because its time is in the darkness at the end of the night.[5]

The Reality of magic

It has become popular in modern times to deny that magic has any reality to it at all. Popular stories about the effects of magic are explained away as the result of psychological disorders like hysteria, etc., and it is pointed out that magic only affects those who believe in it.[6] Magical feats are all described as hoaxes based on a series of illusions and tricks.

In spite of the fact that Islam rejects the effects of charms and amulets with regards to the prevention of misfortune and the attraction of good fortune, it does recognize that some aspects of magic are real. It is true that much of the magic around today is a product of trickery involving gadgets cleverly designed to deceive audiences. But, just as in the case of fortunetelling, there exist around the world some people who practice real magic resulting

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[3] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, p. 445, hadith no. 662, Muslim, Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1393, hadith no. 4989 and Tirmidhi.

[4] Or *Suḥūr*. See *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 1317.

[5] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 382.

[6] The *Ash'arite* scholar, Fakhrud-Deen ar-Rāzi (d. 1210CE) proposed this idea in his commentary on verse 102 of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* and the noted historian, Ibn Khaldoon, further developed it.

from their contact with the *Shayāṭīn* (the evil *Jinns*). Before looking at the *Jinn* and their abilities, let us look at the evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah used to support the position that Islam recognizes a reality to some manifestations of magic. Such an approach to the subject is essential, as the ultimate criterion for truth and falsehood in Islam lies in these two sources of divine revelation to man.

Allah (ﷻ), in the Qur'an explains the fundamental Islamic view of magic in the following verses:

﴿وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ كِتَـٰبَ ٱللَّهِ وَرَآءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٠١)

"*And when a messenger from Allah [Muhammad] came to them confirming what they had with them [i.e. the prophecies about Muhammad in the Torah], a group from among those who were given the scripture [i.e. Rabbis] cast Allah's Book behind their backs pretending they had no knowledge of it or him.*" (Qur'an 2: 101)

After pointing out the hypocrisy of the Jews with regards to the prophets sent to them, Allah goes on to take apart a lie which they had invented about Prophet Sulaymān (Solomon) (ﷺ):

﴿وَٱتَّبَعُوا۟ مَا تَتْلُوا۟ ٱلشَّيَـٰطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَـٰنَ ۖ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَـٰنُ وَلَـٰكِنَّ ٱلشَّيَـٰطِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ يُعَلِّمُونَ ٱلنَّاسَ ٱلسِّحْرَ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَى ٱلْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَـٰرُوتَ وَمَـٰرُوتَ ۚ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَآ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ ۖ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِۦ بَيْنَ ٱلْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِۦ ۚ وَمَا هُم بِضَآرِّينَ بِهِۦ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ

وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنفَعُهُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ ۚ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ (سورة البَقَرَة: ١٠٢)

"They follow what the Shayāṭīn [devil] related concerning Solomon's kingdom, but it was not Solomon who disbelieved, it was the devils who disbelieved by teaching the people magic and that which was revealed to the angels Hāroot and Māroot in Babylon. Although the two would not teach anyone anything until after they warned them saying, 'Verily we are only a test and trial, so do not commit disbelief.' But the people went ahead and learned from the two of them what could cause the separation of a man from his wife. However, they could not harm anyone with it except by Allah's permission. They [in fact] learned what would only harm their own souls and not benefit them. Verily they knew that whoever purchases it would have no share in the Hereafter. Evil indeed was the price for which they sold their own souls if they only knew."

(Qur'an 2: 102)

The Jews used to justify their practice of magic within an esoteric mystical system called the *Cabala* by claiming that they had learned it from Prophet Sulaymān (Solomon) himself. Allah explains that after tossing the divine scriptures behind their backs and rejecting the last Prophet, the Jews chose to follow magical formulas taught to them by devils. These devils already committed disbelief just by teaching it. They also taught an art of sorcery called astrology. It had been taught in ancient times by two angels by the names Hāroot and Māroot who were sent as a test to the people of Babylon. The angels used to warn the people

not to commit disbelief by learning sorcery before they would teach them any of its principles, but the people did not pay heed to their warnings. They learned from astrology how to cause enmity between people and destroy marriages to such a degree that they thought they could harm whomsoever they pleased. However, Allah is really the One who decides whom it will affect and whom it will not. This knowledge which they learned was of no real benefit to them, thus, they only harmed themselves by learning it. Because acts of disbelief are essential to the practice of real magic, they harmed themselves by guaranteeing for themselves a place in Hell.

The Jews who learned these arts knew well that they were cursed because it was forbidden in their own scriptures. The following verses can still be found in the Torah they possess nowadays:

> "When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an auger, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you."[7]

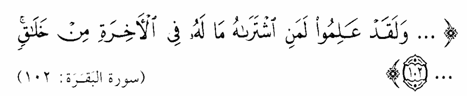
But they paid no heed to these scriptures, pretending they were not there. It was also written in the Torah that whosoever partook of the magical arts would forever abide in the fire, cut off totally from any of the rewards of Paradise. But, the Jews removed these verses altogether from the Torah and practiced the magical arts.

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[7] Deuteronomy 18:9-12.

Allah (ﷻ) closes the verses on a note of pity in order to confirm the graveness of their situation. If only the Jews knew how severe the penalty of the next life is, they would realize how terrible it was for them to sell the future of their souls for a few cheap tricks in this short life.

These verse clearly indicate that magic is *ḥarām* (forbidden) in the phrase:



"... *Whoever purchases it would have no share of Paradise in the Hereafter...*" (Qur'an 2: 102)

Eternal residence in the fire could only be a punishment for an extremely *ḥarām* action. The verse also proves that the magician as well as one who learns or teaches magic are *kāfirs* (disbelievers). The phrase, "*Whoever purchases it*" (i.e. acquires it) is general in its implications. It includes whoever acquires wealth from teaching it, whoever pays to learn it, or simply whoever has knowledge of it. Allah also referred to magic as being *kufr* (disbelief) in the phrase: "*Verily we are a test and a trial so do not commit disbelief,*" and "*It was not Solomon who committed disbelief it was the devils who disbelieved by teaching the people magic*" (Qur'an 2: 102).

The previously mentioned verse proves without a doubt that some magic has reality to it. There is also a hadith in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri* and other books of hadith which mentions that the Prophet (ﷺ) himself suffered from the effects of magic:

"Zayd ibn Arqam reported that a Jew by the name of Labeeb ibn 'Āṣam, cast a magical spell on the Prophet

and when he began to suffer from it, Jibreel (Gabriel) came to him and revealed the *Mu'awwa-dhatān* (*Sūrahs al-Falaq* and *an-Nās*) then said to him, 'Surely it was a Jew who cast this spell on you and the magical charm is in a certain well.' The Prophet sent 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib to go and fetch the charm. When he returned with it, the Prophet told him to unite the knots in it, one by one, and recite a verse from the *Sūrahs* with each. When he did so, the Prophet got up as if he had been released from being tied up."[8]

Every nation on Earth has records of people who have practiced some form of magic. Although some of it may have been false, it is highly unlikely that the whole of mankind could have agreed to make up similar stories about magical and supernatural events. Anyone who seriously contemplates the widespread presence of recorded instances of supernatural phenomena, will conclude that there must be some common thread of reality to them. "Haunted" houses, seances, ouija boards, voodoo, demonic possession, speaking in tongues, levitation, etc., all represent puzzles to those unfamiliar with the world of the *Jinn*. All of these occucrences have their own manifestations in various parts of the world. Even the Muslim world is plagued with it, especially, among the shaykhs (masters) of various extremist *Sufi* (mystical) orders. Many of them appear to levitate, travel huge distances in split instants of time, produce food or money from nowhere, etc. Their ignorant followers believe these feats of magic to be divine miracles and thus, willingly give their wealth and lives in service to their shaykhs.

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[8] Collected by 'Abd ibn Ḥumayd and al-Bayhaqi and much of it can also be found in Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, Pp. 443-4, hadith no. 660 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, Pp. 1192-3, hadith no. 5428.

But behind all of these phenomena lie the hidden and sinister world of the *Jinn.*

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the *Jinn* are essentially invisible except for those in the snake and dog form.[9] However, some of them are able to take any form they wish including human form. For example, Abu Hurayrah said,

> "Allah's Messenger made me responsible to protect the Zakah (charity) of Ramaḍān. While I was doing so, someone came and began to dig around in the food so I caught a hold of him. I said, 'By Allah I am going to take you to Allah's messenger!' The man implored, 'Verily I am poor and I have dependents. I am in great need.' So I let him go. The next morning, the Prophet said, 'O' Abu Hurayrah, what did your captive do last night?' I said, 'He complained of being in great need and of having a family so I let him go.' The Prophet replied, 'Surely he lied to you and he will return.' Since I knew that he was going to return, I laid in wait for him. When he returned and began to dig in the food, I grabbed him and said, 'I am definitely going to take you to Allah's messenger.' He pleaded, 'Let me go! Verily I'm poor and I do have a family. I won't return.' So I had mercy on him and let him go. The next morning Allah's messenger said, 'O' Abu Hurayrah, what did your captive do last night?' I said that he complained of being in great need and of having a family, so I let him go. The Prophet replied, 'Surely he lied to you and he will return.' So I waited for him and grabbed him when he began to scatter the food around. I said, 'By Allah, I will take you to Allah's messenger.

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[9] See chapter five on Fortunetellers, for evidence of this fact.

> This is the third time, and you promised you would not return. Yet you came back anyway! He said, 'Let me give you some words by which Allah will benefit you.' I said, 'What are they?' He replied, 'Whenever you go to bed recite *Āyatul-Kursi* (Verse 255 of the *Sūrah al-Baqarah*) from beginning to end. If you do so, a guardian from Allah will always be with you and Satan will not come near you until the morning.' Then I let him go. The next morning Allah's messenger said, 'What did your captive do last night?' I said that he claimed that he would teach me some words by which Allah would benefit me so I let him go. When the Prophet asked what they were, I told him that they were saying *Āyatul Kursi* before going to bed. I also told him that he said that a guardian from Allah would remain with me and Satan would not come near me until I awoke in the morning. The Prophet said, 'Surely he has told the truth although he is a compulsive liar. O', Abu Hurayrah! Do you know who you have been speaking to these past three nights?' I replied, 'No.' And he said, 'That was a devil.'[10]

They are also able to travel over vast distances instantaneously and enter human bodies prepared for their entry. Allah has seen fit to give them these extraordinary abilities, as He has given other creatures abilities beyond those of man. Yet, He has chosen man to be above all of creation.

If these basic facts about the *Jinn's* abilities are kept in mind, all of the supernatural and magical incidents which are not hoaxes can be easily explained. For example, in the case of "haunted" houses, where lights go on and off, pictures fall from

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[10] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 4, Pp. 319-20, hadith no. 495.

the walls, objects fly through the air, floors creak, etc., the *Jinns* are acting on material objects while remaining in their invisible form. This is also true in the case of seances where the spirits of dead people seemingly communicate with the living. People who know the voices of their dead relatives, hear them speak to them of incidents from their lives. This feat is accomplished by the medium summoning the *Jinn* which was assigned to the dead person. It is this *Jinn* which imitates the dead person's voice and relates incidents from the person's past. Similarly in the case of the ouija board which appears to answer questions. The invisible prodding of the *Jinn* can easily cause amazing results if the proper atmosphere is set. In the case of those who appear to be able to levitate or raise objects without touching them, they are simply lifted up into the air by the invisible hand of the *Jinn*. Those able to travel vast distances and be in two places at almost the same time are transported by their invisible companions or the *Jinn* may even become visible in their form. Likewise, those who are able to produce food or money from the air are aided by the invisible and fast moving *Jinn*.[11] Even the most amazing cases of apparent reincarnation like that of a seven year old girl in India by the name of Shanti Devi who related instances from her previous life in vivid and accurate detail. She described her former home in the town of Muttra which was in a province far away from where she lived. When people went there to check, the local people confirmed that such a house had once stood where she described. They also confirmed some of the details of her former life.[12] Obviously this information was put into her subconscious mind by the *Jinn*. The Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed this phenomenon when

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[11] See *Ibn Taymeeyah's Essay on the Jinn*, Pp. 47-59, for numerous accounts of such incidences.

[12] Colin Wilson, *The Occult*, (New York: Random House, 1971, Pp. 514-515).

he said,

> "Verily the dreams which a man sees in his sleep are of three types: A dream from *ar-Raḥmān* (Allah), a sad dream from Satan and subconscious dreams."[13]

There is no doubt that the *Jinn* can enter the human body as it enters the mind. Cases of possession are too numerous to count. It may be temporary as in the case of many Christian and pagan sects where people work themselves into a physical and spiritual frenzy, fall into a state of unconsciousness and begin to speak in foreign tongues. In that weakened state the *Jinn* may easily enter their bodies and cackle on their lips. This phenomena has also been recorded by some *Sufi*[14] orders during their *dhikr*[15] sessions. Or, it may be a long term phenomenon wherein major personality changes take place. The possessed often act irrationally, exhibit superhuman strength or the *Jinn* may actually talk through them on a regular basis.

Exorcism[16] became a widespread practice in Europe during the middle ages. The Christian practice of exorcism is based on numerous accounts of Jesus exorcising possessed people related in the Gospels. In one account Jesus and his companions came to Gerasenes and met a man possessed. When Jesus commanded the demons to leave him, they left him and entered a herd of swine which was feeding on a nearby hillside. The herd then rushed

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[13] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1395, hadith no. 5001. *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah*, vol. 4, p. 487, hadith no. 1870.

[14] Mysticism which developed among Muslim peoples.

[15] God's names are repeated continuously and often musically while swaying the body or even dancing.

[16] The expulsion of evil spirits or demons from possessed people or places.

down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.[17] It has also become the topic of a number of films produced in the late seventies and eighties (e.g. "The Exorcist", "Rosemary's Baby", etc.). The general attitude of the materialist West is the rejection of everything supernatural. Thus, to Westerners, exorcism has no rational basis and is looked at as a result of superstition. This attitude is a reaction to the wide scale witch hunts and burnings which took place in Europe during the Dark and Middle ages. However, in Islam the practice of exorcism is recognized as a valid means of treating genuine cases of possession and other ailments resulting from it, if the method conforms to the Qur'an and Sunnah.

There are essentially three methods of removing the *Jinn* from a possessed person:

> First, the *Jinn* may be removed by summoning another *Jinn*. This method is forbidden in Islam because calling the *Jinn* often involves acts of sacrilege. The tenets of Islam are likely to be desecrated for the *Jinn* to be beckoned. This is the case where a magician or witch breaks a spell cast by another.
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> Second, the *Jinn* may be removed by confirming *Shirk* in its presence. When the *Jinn* is pleased by the *Kufr* of the exorcist he may also leave. In doing so, he assures the exorcist that his method and beliefs are correct. This is the case of Christian priests who exorcise the *Jinn* by calling on Jesus and by using the cross, as well as that of pagan high priests who exorcise in the name of their false deities.
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> Third, the *Jinn* may also be expelled by using Qur'anic

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[17] See Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39.

> recitation and prayers seeking refuge in Allah. These divine words and formulas help to change the atmosphere around the possessed. The *Jinn* may then be driven out of the body by commands and possibly even accompanied by blows. However, these practises by themselves are useless unless the one doing them has firm *Eemān* (faith) and a good contact with Allah based on righteous deeds.

Although some Muslims today under Western secular influence openly deny possession and others even go so far as to deny the existence of the *Jinn,* both the Qur'an and Sunnah say otherwise. There are a number of authentic traditions in which the Prophet (ﷺ) is recorded as having exorcised people. There are, as well, traditions of his Companions doing the same with his approval. The following are three narrations describing three different methods.

Ya'lā ibn Marrah said,

> "Once I went travelling with the Prophet and we came across a woman sitting with her child in the road. She said, 'O' Messenger of Allah, this boy has been afflicted and has caused us many trials. I don't know how many times per day he is seized by spells!' The Prophet said, 'Give him to me.' So she raised him up to him and the Prophet put the boy in front of him in the middle of his saddle. Then he opened the boy's mouth, blew[18] in it thrice and said, '*Bismillāh* (in the name of Allah)! I am a slave of Allah, so get away, O' enemy of Allah!' Then he

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[18] The Arabic word here is (*Nafatha*) which means to put the tip of the tongue between the lips and blow. It is thus a cross between blowing (*Nafakha*) and spitting lightly (*Tafala*).

> returned the boy to the woman, and said, 'Meet us here on our return and tell us what happened.' Then we went and on our return we found her at the place. She had with her three sheep so the Prophet asked, 'How is your boy?' She replied, 'By the One who has sent you with the truth, we haven't noticed anything wrong with him since then, so I've brought you these sheep.' The Prophet said to me, 'Dismount and take one. Then return the rest to her.' "[19]

Umm Abān bint al-Wāzi' reported that,

> "When her grandfather Zāri' went with a delegation from their tribe to see the Messenger of Allah, he brought along with him a son of his who was insane. When he reached Allah's messenger he said, 'I have a son with me who is insane, so I have brought him for you to pray for him.' The Prophet told him to bring him. So he took off his son's travelling clothes and put on some good clothes, then carried him to the Prophet. The Prophet said, 'Bring him close to me and turn his back to me.' The Prophet then grabbed the boy's clothes and began to hit him severely on his back. While he was hitting him he said, 'Get out, enemy of Allah! Enemy of Allah get out!' The boy then began to look around as if he were all right. The Prophet sat him down in front of him and called for some water. He then wiped it on the boys' face and made a prayer for him. After the Prophet's prayer, there were none in the delegation who was better than the boy."[20]

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[19] Collected by Aḥmad.

[20] Collected by Aḥmad and Abu Dawūd at-Tayālasi from Matar ibn 'Abd ar-Raḥmān (*Usud al-Ghābah*, vol. 2, p. 145). Ibn Ḥajar rated Umm Abān as an acceptable narrator.

Khārijah ibn aṣ-Ṣalt reported that his uncle said,

> "Once, when we left Allah's messenger's company, we came across a bedouin tribe. Some of them said, 'We have been told that you have come with some good things from that man (i.e. Prophet Muhammad). Do you have any medicine or incantation for a man possessed?' We answered yes, so they brought a madman bound in a spell. I recited the *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* over him every morning and evening for three days. Every time I completed the recitation, I would gather my saliva and spit. Finally he got up as if he broke free from being tied in bonds. The Bedouins then brought me a gift as payment, so I said to them, 'I can't accept it until I ask Allah's messenger.' When I asked the Prophet, he said, 'Take it. For, by my life, whoever eats by way of false incantations will bear the burden of his sin. But you have earned that wage with an incantation of truth.' "[21]

The Islamic ruling on magic

Since both the practice and learning of magic is classified in Islam as *kufr* (disbelief), the Shari'ah (Islamic law) has set aside a very stiff sentence for anyone caught practising it. The penalty for anyone caught practising it, who does not repent and give it up, is death. This law is based on the following hadith reported by Jundub ibn Ka'b that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "The prescribed punishment for the magician is that he be executed by the sword."[22]

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[21] *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1092, hadith no. 3887.

[22] Collected by Tirmidhi. This hadith, though *Ḍa'īf* (weak) in its chain of=

This law was applied vigorously by the Righteous Caliphs who led the Muslim nation after the Prophet's death. Bajjālah ibn 'Abdah reported that Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ﷺ) sent a letter to the Muslim forces waging a campaign against Rome and Persia which commanded them to inform all the Zoroastrians married to their mothers, daughters and sisters to dissolve such marriages. They were also told to eat the food of Zoroastrians in order to include them in the category of *Ahl al-Kitāb.*[23] Finally, they were ordered to kill every fortuneteller and magician who they found. Bajālah said that on the basis of the order he personally executed three magicians.[24]

Muhammad ibn 'Abdur-Raḥmān reported that Ḥafṣah, wife of the Prophet (ﷺ) and daughter of 'Umar, had a servant girl of hers killed because she worked some magic on her.[25]

This punishment is also recorded in the Torah to this day, clearly showing the Jews and Christians that magic is forbidden;

> "A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned with stones, their blood shall be put upon them."[26]

=narration has been upgraded to the level of *Ḥasan* (relatively authentic), due to supporting evidence. Three of the leading four legists (Aḥmad, Abu Ḥaneefah and Mālik) ruled according to it. While the fourth, ash-Shāfi'i ruled that the magician should only be killed if his magic feats reached the level of *kufr* (see *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, Pp. 390-1).

[23] Those who follow a revealed scripture like the Jews and Christians. This portion of the narration was collected by Bukhari, Tirmidhi and Nasā'i.

[24] Collected by Aḥmad, Abu Dawūd and al-Bayhaqi.

[25] Collected by Mālik, *Muwaṭṭa Imam Malik*, (Eng. Trans.), Pp. 344-5, hadith no. 1511.

[26] Leviticus 20:27.

After the time of the Righteous Caliphs, the laws became lax. The Umayyad kings not only allowed magicians and fortunetellers to practise their forbidden arts but they also introduced them into the royal court. Since the state stopped applying the law, some of the *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions of the Prophet) took it upon themselves to enforce it. Abu 'Uthmān an-Nahdi reported that Caliph al-Walīd ibn 'Abdil-Mālik (Rule 705-715 C.E.) had a man in his court who used to perform feats of magic. Once he severed a man's head and separated it completely from his body. When the shock of his deed electrified the audience, he proceeded to further amaze them by rejoining the head. And the man then appeared as if his head had never been cut off. The people in the audience gasped, "*Subḥānallāh* (Glory be to Allah)! He is able to give life to the dead!" The *Ṣaḥābi,* Jundub al-Azdi, noticed the commotion in al-Walīd's court so he came and watched the magician's performance. On the following day, he returned with his sword strapped across his back. When the magician stepped up to begin his show, Jundub burst through the crowd with his sword drawn and chopped off the head of the magician. He then turned to the startled audience and said, "If he is really able to bring life to the dead, let him bring himself back to life." Al-Walīd had him arrested and thrown in jail.[27]

The severity of the ruling on magicians is primarily to protect the weaker elements of society from falling into *shirk* in *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* by attributing to magicians divine qualities belonging only to Allah. In addition to the sacrilege committed by those who practise witchcraft in earnest, magicians often claim for themselves supernatural powers and divine attributes, in order to attract a following and earn undue fame.

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[27] Collected by Bukhari in his book on History.

Chapter Eight

TRANSCENDENCY

Allah, the Most Great and Most Glorious, has described Himself in His revealed books and through His prophets in order that man may have a better understanding of just Who He is. Since the human mind is limited in its knowledge and scope, it is impossible for it to understand something which has no limits. Therefore, Allah mercifully took it upon Himself to reveal to man some of His attributes, in order that mankind may not confuse the attributes of created things with those of Allah. When Allah's attributes are confused with those of creation, man ends up deifying creation. It is this deification of creation which is the essence and basis of idolatry in all of its forms. In all pagan religions and cults created beings or objects are falsely endowed by man with divine attributes and consequently they become objects of worship instead of Allah or along with Allah.

Among Allah's countless attributes is one which is of paramount importance with regard to the worship of God as opposed to the worship of His creation. It is an attribute which became confused with the appearance among Muslims of the Greek-influenced *Mu'tazilite* school of philosophical thought and remains misunderstood among many Muslims until today.[1] This critical attribute is that of *al-'Uloo,* which in English means

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[1] Naṣiruddeen al-Albāni, *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uloo*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1st ed., 1981, p. 23.

highness or transcendence. When it is used to describe Allah, this attribute refers to the fact that Allah is above and beyond His creation. He is neither enclosed by the creation nor is any part of the creation above Him in any way. He is not a part of the created world nor is it a part of Him. In fact, His Being is totally distinct and separate from His creation. He is the Creator and the universe and its contents are all a part of His creation. However, His attributes function without restriction in His creation. He sees, hears and knows all, and He is the prime cause of all that happens within the worlds of creation. Nothing happens without His will. Consequently, it may be said that the Islamic concept of Allah in relationship to His creation is essentially dualistic, but in relationship to Allah alone or creation alone it is strictly unitarian. It is dualistic in the sense that Allah is Allah, and creation is creation. Two separate entities, the Creator and the created, the Infinite and the finite. Neither is one the other nor are they both one. At the same time the Islamic concept is uncompromisingly unitarian in the sense that Allah is absolutely one, without parents, offspring or partner. He is unique in His divinity and nothing is similar to Him. He is the sole source of power in the universe and everything depends on Him. Likewise, it is firmly unitarian vis-a-vis creation, because all of the universe and its contents were created by Allah alone. All created beings and entities are the product of the same Creator, and, as such, are constructed from the same elemental substances, the building blocks of "nature".

Significance

The attribute of transcendence has special significance to man with regard to his worship of God. Prior to the arrival of Islam in its final form, man had strayed far away from the implications of this noble attribute. Christians claimed that Allah

had come to the earth and became flesh and blood in the form of man, Prophet 'Eesa (Jesus) (ﷺ), whom they claim was crucified and died. The Jews before them also claimed that Allah came down to earth in the form of a man and lost in a wrestling match with Prophet Yaqoob (Jacob) (ﷺ).[2] The Persians regarded their kings as gods endowed with all of Allah's attributes, and, consequently, they worshipped them directly. The Hindus believed that *Brahma,* the supreme Being, was in every place and in everything so they worshipped countless idols, human beings and even animals as personifications of *Brahma.*[3] In fact, this belief has taken Hindus to an incredible state wherein they actually make pilgrimage to their Holy city of Banaras to worship the god Shiva personified as an erect male penis endearingly called *Lingam.*[4]

The Hindu idea that *Brahma* is everywhere later became a part of the Christian belief system and eventually found its way among Muslims many generations after the Prophet (ﷺ). When the philosophical books of India, Persia and Greece were translated during the Golden Age of the 'Abbāsid Empire, the concept of Allah being everywhere and in everything was

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[2] Genesis 32:24-30.

[3] John R. Hinnells, *Dictionary of Religions*, (England: Penguin Books, 1984, Pp. 67-8).

[4] *Collier's Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 130. See Santha Rama Rau's article "Banaras: India's City of Light", *National Geographic*, February 1986, p. 235, "A dual natured deity, Siva destroys but also creates. Lingams, usually shaped from stone, are phallic symbols representing the god's regenerative powers. Huge Lingams are a common feature of temples. The Lingam typically appears on a circular base, called a Yoni (female organ), that represents Shakti, the god's female half and a source of divine energy. In the broadest sense, the Lingam symbolizes the entirety of the Hindu universe... In a common Hindu ceremony, a priest bedecks a Lingam with flowers, anoints it with clarified butter, and washes it with milk and water!"

introduced into philosophical circles and became a foundational principle in the creed of *Sufi* (mystical) orders. Eventually it gained sway with a philosophical school known as the *Mu'tazilah* (the Rationalists) followers of which occupied key posts in the administration of the 'Abbāsid Caliph, Ma'moon (rule: 813 to 832 CE). With the blessing of the Caliph, they vigorously propagated this belief along with the other distortions contained in their school of philosophy. Inquisition courts were set up throughout the empire and many scholars were killed, jailed and tortured for their opposition to the philosophy of the *Mu'tazilites*.

It was not until Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (778-855 CE) stood his ground and defended the beliefs of early Muslim scholars and the *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions of the Prophet), that the tide was eventually turned. During the reign of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (rule 847-861), the *Mu'tazilite* philosophers were removed from sensitive administrative posts in the government and their philosophy was officially condemned. Although most of their ideas died out in time, that of Allah being everywhere (i.e. immanent) has remained to this day among followers of the *Ash'arite* school.[5] This school was founded by scholars who left

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[5] This school of scholastic theology takes its name from Abul-Ḥasan 'Ali al-Ash'ari (873-935 CE) a theologian born in Baṣrah who until his fortieth year was a zealous pupil of the *Mu'tazilite* theologian al-Jubbā'i. After a study of hadith elucidated for him the contradiction between *Mu'tazilite* views and the spirit of Islam, he began to champion the orthodox views. He is considered the founder of orthodox scholasticism (*Kalām*) and his most famous works are *al-Ibānah 'an Uṣool ad-Diyānah* (translated by W.C. Klein, New Haven, 1940) and *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyeen*, (Cairo, Maktabah an-Nahdah al-Miṣreeyah, 2nd ed., 1969). Towards the end to his life al-Ash'ari abandoned scholasticism altogether and relied solely on hadith. However, other theologians especially of the *Shāfi'ite* school of law adopted his earlier views and the *Ash'arite* school took on a life of its own. Al-Bāqillāni (d. 1013 CE) reduced al-Ash'ari's refutation to a system, established the intellectual basis and arranged the=

the *Mu'tazilite* philosophy and attempted to refute the excesses of *Mu'tazilite* thought from a philosophical basis.

Danger of the immanence concept

On the basis of the false attribute of divine immanence (i.e. the belief that "God is everywhere") some claimed that God was more in humans than in animals, vegetation, minerals, etc. From that theory it was only a matter of time before some claimed that God was more in them than in the rest of humans, either by *Ḥulool* (indwelling of Allah in man) or by *Ittiḥād* (complete unification of the human soul with Allah's "soul"). Among Muslim people of the ninth century, a deranged mystic and so-called saint, al-Ḥallāj (858-992 CE), openly declared that he and Allah were one.[6] The *Nuṣayrites,* a breakaway *Shi'ite* sect of the tenth century, claimed that the Prophet's son-in-law, 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib, was manifestation of Allah[7] and another breakaway *Shi'ite* sect of the eleventh century called the *Druze* claimed that the Fatimid *Shi'ite* caliph, al-Ḥākim bi Amrillāh (996-1021 CE) was the last incarnation of God among men.[8] Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240 CE), another so-called *Sufi* saint of the twelfth century, exhorted his followers in his poetry to pray to themselves and not to anything outside of themselves because he believed the God was inside man.[9] This same theory was the essence of Elijah Muhammad's

=arguments. Among the leading *Ash'arite* scholars following him were Imam al-Haramayn (al-Juwayni, d. 1086), al-Ghazzāli (d. 1112) and ar-Rāzi (d. 1210), (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Pp. 46-7 and Pp. 210-15).

[6] A.J. Arberry, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976, Pp. 266-71).

[7] *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Pp. 454-55.

[8] Ibid, Pp. 94-5.

[9] Ibn 'Arabi described Allah as follows, "Glory be to He, who made all things=

(d. 1975) claim in America that black people were "Allahs" and that his mentor, Fard Muhammad, was the supreme Allah himself.[10] Reverend Jim Jones, who killed himself and 900 of his followers in Guyana in 1979, is one of the most recent examples of man claiming to be God and people accepting it. In fact, Jim Jones learned his philosophy and psychological techniques for manipulating the innocent from another American who called himself Father Divine. Father Divine, whose real name was George Baker, appeared during the early depression years of the 1920's and opened restaurants for the poor. After capturing their stomachs, he projected on them the claim that he was god incarnate. In time he married and named his Canadian wife, Mother Divine. By the mid-thirties his followers numbered in the millions and were to be found all across the U.S.A. and even in Europe.[11]

Thus, these claims of divinity were not limited to any particular place or religious group. They simply took root wherever the soil was fertile. If minds were already prepared by the belief in God's immanence in His creation to accept the man-god concept, then those who claimed divinity could easily find followers.

It may be concluded that the belief that "Allah is every where" is extremely dangerous primarily because it encourages, defends and rationalizes the greatest sin in Allah's sight, the worship of His creation. It is also an aspect of *shirk* in *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* as it claims for God an attribute which does not

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=appear while being their essence." (See, Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futoohāt al Makkīyah*, vol. 2, p. 604), quoted in *Hādhihee Heya as-Soofeeyah* by 'Abdur-Raḥmān al-Wakeel, (Makkah: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmeeyah, 3rd ed., 1979, p. 35).

[10] Elijah Muhammad, *Our Saviour Has Arrived* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple of Islam, no. 2, 1974, Pp. 25, 56-7 and 39-46).

[11] E.U., Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 32).

belong to Him. Neither in the Qur'an nor on the tongue of the Prophet (ﷺ) can such a description of Allah be found. In fact, both the Qur'an and the Sunnah confirm the opposite.

Clear proofs

Since the greatest sin in God's sight is the worship of others besides Him or along with Him, and everything besides Him is His creation, the principles of Islam are all either directly or indirectly opposed to the worship of creation. The fundamental tenets of the Faith make a very clear distinction between the Creator and what He has created.

There are a number of proofs based on the essential elements of the Islamic creed that have been used by orthodox Muslim scholars to establish the fact that Allah is totally separate from, and above His creation. The following are seven such proofs.

1. A natural proof

Man, from the Islamic viewpoint, is born with certain natural tendencies and is not merely a product of his environment. This fact is based on the Qur'anic passage in which Allah explained that when He created Adam, He extracted from him all of his descendants and made them bear witness to His unity.[12] This concept is further emphasized by the Prophet's statement that,

> "Every new born child is born with an inclination to worship Allah, but its parents make it a Jew, a Magian or a Christian."[13]

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[12] *(Qur'an 7: 172).*

[13] Reported by Abu Hurayrah in Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 8, Pp. 369-90, hadith no. 597 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1399, hadith no. 6429.

Therefore, man's natural reaction to the implications of the "god is everywhere belief" may be used, to some degree, as a measure of its accuracy. If Allah exists everywhere and is present in everything, it would imply that His essence could be found in filth and filthy places. When confronted with this implication, most people are naturally repulsed by the thought. They find themselves instinctually unable to accept any statement which points to the fact that Allah, the Creator of the Universe, is present in man's excrements or in any other items or places not befitting His majesty. Therefore, it may be concluded that since man's natural instincts, placed in him by Allah, reject the claim that Allah is everywhere, it is highly unlikely that such a claim would be correct. Those unwilling to give up the "God is everywhere belief", however, might argue that man's repulsion towards this concept is a result of upbringing and conditioning, and not really a result of natural instincts. But, the vast majority of young children automatically reject this concept without any hesitation or contemplation, even though most of them were previously indoctrinated with the idea that Allah is everywhere.

2. The prayer proof

According to the rules and regulations governing prayer in Islam, places of worship must be completely free from statues or pictorial representation of God or His creation and the various positions of worship used in formal prayer (bowing, prostrating, etc.) are prohibited from being directed to anyone or anything besides God. If God were present everywhere; in every thing and in every individual, it would be perfectly acceptable for people to direct worship towards each other or even to direct worship towards themselves as the infamous *Sufi* "saint", Ibn 'Arabi, suggested in some of his writings. It would also not be possible to logically convince an idol worshipper or one who worships trees

or animals that his method of worship is wrong and that he should only worship the unseen God, Allah, who is alone without partners. The idolater would merely answer that he is not worshipping the object itself but the part of God which is inside of these objects or God who incarnated Himself in human or animal forms. Yet Islam classifies anyone who does such an act as a *kāfir* (disbeliever) regardless of the rationale. The fact is that such an individual is prostrating before God's creation. Islam came to take man away from the worship of man and other created beings, and lead them to the worship of the Creator alone. Therefore, the commandments in Islam concerning worship clearly indicate that Allah is not to be found in created things; He is totally separate from them. This position is further strengthened by a **total** ban in Islam on any pictorial representation of God or any other living being from the animal world.

3. The *Mi'rāj* proof

Two years prior to his migration to Madīnah, the Prophet (ﷺ) made a miraculous night journey (*Isrā'*) from Makkah to Jerusalem where he (ﷺ) took the *Mi'rāj* [14] up through the seven skies to the pinnacle of creation. This miraculous journey was bestowed on him in order that he be in the direct presence of Allah. It was there, above the seventh heaven, that *Ṣalāh* (formal prayer) was made compulsory five times per day, Allah (ﷻ) spoke directly to the Prophet (ﷺ), and Allah revealed to him the last verses of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (Second Chapter of the Qur'an).[15] If Allah were everywhere there would have been no

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[14] The noun of instrument *Mi'rāj* (Lit. stairs or ladder) is actually the vehicle which took the Prophet up through the heavens. However, the ascension itself is commonly referred to by this name. (See Lane's, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, Pp. 1966-7)

[15] See Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, Pp. 449-50, hadith no. 608 and=

need for the Prophet (ﷺ) to go anywhere. He could have been in the direct presence to Allah on the earth in his own house. Therefore, the incident of the miraculous ascension of the Prophet (ﷺ) up through the heavens contains within it a subtle implication that Allah is above His Creation and not a part of it.

4. The Qur'anic proof

The number of verses in the Qur'an that state that Allah (ﷻ) is above His creation are too numerous to count. They are found in almost every chapter of the Qur'an, either directly or indirectly. Among the indirect references are those that refer to things rising up to God or descending from Him. For example, in *Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ*, Allah calls Himself "*aṣ-Ṣamad*"[16] which means: that to which things rise. Such references are sometimes literal, as in the case of the angels about whom Allah (ﷻ) said,

﴿تَعْرُجُ ٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ وَٱلرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِى يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُۥ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ ۝٤﴾ (سورة المعارج: ٤)

"*The angels and the Spirit [Gabriel] ascend up to Him in a day whose length is like fifty thousand years.*"
(Qur'an 70: 4)

And sometimes spiritual, as in the case of prayer and *Dhikr* about which Allah (ﷻ) said,

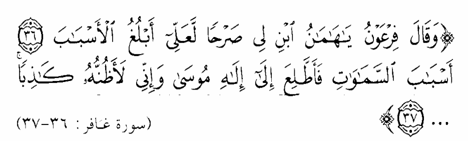
﴿... إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ ٱلْكَلِمُ ٱلطَّيِّبُ ... ۝١٠﴾ (سورة فاطر: ١٠)

"... *Every good saying goes up to Him...*" (Qur'an 35: 10)

Even in the following verse:

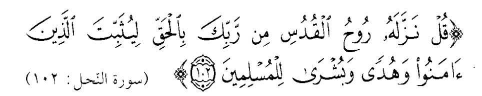
=Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, Pp. 103-4, hadith no. 313 for the Prophet's account of the incident.

[16] *Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ: (Qur'an 112: 2).*



"*Pharaoh said, 'O' Hāmān, build a lofty place for me that I may attain the ways. The ways of [reaching] the heavens for me to behold the God of Moses, for I certainly believe he is a liar...*" (Qur'an 40: 36: 37)

An example of descent from God can be found in the following verse:



"*Say, the Holy Spirit has brought it [the revelation] down from your Lord in truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a guide and glad tidings to Muslims.*" (Qur'an 16: 102)

Direct references can be found in both the divine names of God as well as in His explicit statements. For example, Allah calls Himself by the names "*al-'Alī*" and "*al-A'lā*" both of which mean the highest, above which there is nothing. For example, "*al-'Ali al-'Adhīm,*"[17] "*Rabbikal-A'lā*"[18]. He also explicitly, referred to Himself as being above His servants saying,

﴿وَهُوَ ٱلْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِۦ ... ﴿١٨﴾﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١٨)

"*He is al-Qāhir [The Irresistible] above His worshippers ...*" (Qur'an 6: 18 and 61)

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[17] *(Qur'an 2: 225).*

[18] *(Qur'an 87: 1).*

And He (ﷻ) also described His worshippers as,

﴿يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ ... ﴿٥٠﴾﴾ (سورة النحل : ٥٠)

"*Those, who fear their Lord Who is above them...*"

(Qur'an 16: 50)

Therefore, the Qur'an itself clearly points out for those who contemplate its meanings, that Allah is high above His creation and not within it or surrounded by it in any way.[19]

5. HaditHic proof

There is also ample evidence in the statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) which clearly establish that Allah is not on the earth or within His Creation. Like the Qur'anic verses, some hadiths contain indirect references while others are direct. Among the indirect or implied references are those which refer to the angels ascending up to Allah as in the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) in which he narrated that Allah's messenger (ﷺ) said,

> "(A group of) angels stay with you at night and (another group of) angels by daytime, and both groups gather at the time of *'Aṣr* (evening) and *Fajr* (dawn) prayers. Then those angels who have stayed with you overnight, ascend (to Heaven) and Allah asks them (about you) — though He knows all about you..."[20]

Included among the indirect references are those which refer to Allah being above his throne which is itself above all creation. An example of this type can be found in Abu Hurayrah's report that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

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[19] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, Pp. 285-6.

[20] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, Pp. 386-7, hadith no. 525, Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, Pp. 306-7, hadith no. 1320 and Nasā'i.

"When Allah completed creation, He wrote in a Book (which He kept) with Him above His throne, 'Verily My mercy will precede my anger.'"[21]

An example of a direct reference is the narration about the Prophet's wife Zaynab bint Jaḥsh (ﷺ) who used to boast to the other wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) that their families gave them away in marriage to the Prophet (ﷺ) while Allah from above the seven heavens gave her away in marriage.[22]

Another may be found in the *Du'ā'* (prayer) by which the Prophet (ﷺ) taught the sick to pray for themselves,

ربنا الله الذى في السماء تقدس أسمك

Rabbanallāh alladhee fis-Samā'e Taqaddas-asmuka... (Our Lord Allah Who is above the heavens, may Your name be Holy...)[23]

The following hadith is perhaps the most explicit of the direct references. Mu'āwiyah ibn al-Ḥakam said,

"I had a servant girl who used to tend to my sheep in the area of Mount Uḥud, near a place called al-Jawwārīyah. One day I came to see them only to find that a wolf had made off with a sheep from her flock. Since I, like the rest of Adam's descendants, am prone to do regrettable acts, I gave her a terrible slap in her face. When I cam to Allah's Messenger with the story, he considered it a grave thing for me to have done. I said, 'O' Messenger of Allah

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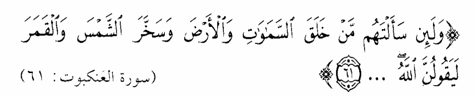
[21] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, Pp. 382-3, hadith no. 518 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1437, hadith no. 6628.

[22] Narrated by Anas in Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, p. 382, hadith no. 517.

[23] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 109, hadith no. 3883.

couldn't I free her?'[24] He replied, 'Bring her to me', so I brought her. He then asked her, 'Where is Allah?' and she replied, 'Above the sky.' Then he asked her, 'Who am I?' and she replied, 'You are Allah's Messenger.' So he said, 'Free her, for verily she is a believer.'"[25]

When testing the faith of others, the logical question to ask would be "Do you believe in Allah?" The Prophet (ﷺ) did not ask that question, because most people at that time believed in Allah, as the Qur'an frequently mentions,



"*And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth and controls the sun and the moon, they will certainly say, 'Allah.'*" (Qur'an 29: 61)

Because the pagan Makkans of that time believed that Allah was somehow present in their idols and thereby a part of creation, the Prophet (ﷺ) wanted to determine if her belief was confused and paganistic like other Makkans or clearly unitarian and according to the divine teachings. Hence, he asked a question which would determine whether she knew that Allah was not a part of His creation or whether she believed that God could be worshipped in creation. Her answer that Allah is above the

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[24] Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawūd collected a hadith transmitted by Abu Hurayrah in which he reported that Allah's Messenger said, "When you hit (others), avoid the face." See Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1378, hadith nos. 6321-6 and *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1256, hadith no. 4478. He is reported to have said, "The expiation for slapping a slave or beating him is to set him free." Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, Pp. 882-3, hadith no. 4078.

[25] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, Pp. 271-2, hadith no. 1094.

heavens has to be considered by true Muslims as the only valid answer to the question "Where is Allah?" because the Prophet (ﷺ) ruled that she was a true believer on the basis of it. If Allah is everywhere as some Muslims today still contend, the Prophet (ﷺ) would have had to correct her answer, "Above the sky", since whatever was said in his presence which he did not reject is considered, according to Islamic Law, approved Sunnah (*Taqrīrīyah*) and thus valid. However, the Prophet (ﷺ) not only accepted her statement, but he also used it as a basis for judging her to be a true believer.

6. The logical proof

Logically speaking, it is obvious that in a case where two things exist, one of those things must either be a part of the other and dependent on it like its attributes, or it must exist by itself, distinct from the other. Thus, when God created the world, either He created it inside Himself or He created it outside of Himself. The first possibility is unacceptable because it would mean that Allah, the infinite Supreme Being, has within Himself finite attributes of deficiency and weakness. Therefore, He must have created the world outside of Himself as an entity distinct from Himself yet depending on Him. Having created the world outside of Himself, He either created it above Himself or below Himself. Since human experience nowhere confirms prayer downwards, and being below creation contradicts God's majesty and supremacy, God must therefore be above His creation and distinct from it.

As to the contradictory descriptive statements that God is neither connected to the world nor separate from it, or that He is neither in the world nor outside of it,[26] such words are not only

[26] See *Hāshiyah al-Bījūri 'alā al-Jawharah*, p. 58.

illogical but they, in fact, deny God's actual existence.[27] Such claims relegate God to the surrealistic realm of human thought where opposite can co-exist and the impossible exist (like three gods in one).

7. The consensus of early scholars

The statements of the early scholars of Islam confirming God's transcendence are too numerous to mention in this concise work. The 15th century hadith scholar, adh-Dhahabi, wrote a book entitled *al-'Uloo lil-'Ali al-'Adhīm* in which he gathered the statements of over 200 major scholars of the past confirming Allah's transcendency.[28]

A good example of such statements can be found in Muṭee' al-Balakhi's report that he asked Abu Ḥaneefah his opinion of a person who says he does not know whether his Lord is in the heavens or on earth. Abu Ḥaneefah replied, 'He has disbelieved, because Allah has said, "*The Most Merciful is above the throne*" *(Qur'an 20: 5)*, and His throne is above His seven heavens." He (al-Balakhi) then said, "What if he said that He is above the throne but he does not know whether the throne is in the heavens or on earth?" He (Abu Ḥaneefah) replied, "He has disbelieved because he has denied that He (Allah) is above the heavens and whoever denies that He is above the heavens has disbelieved."[29] Though many who follow the *Ḥanafi* school of law today claim that Allah is everywhere, the early followers did not hold that position. The incident in which Abu Ḥaneefah's main student, Abu Yousuf, told

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[27] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, Pp. 290-1. See also Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's *ar-Radd 'Alā al-Jahmīyah.*

[28] *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uloo*, p. 5.

[29] Narrated by Abu Ismā'eel al-Anṣāri in his book *al-Fārooq* and quoted in *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 288.

Bishr al-Mareesi[30] to repent when he denied that Allah is above the throne, was recorded in a number of books written during and about that era.[31]

Summary

Therefore, it can be safely said that according to Islam and its key principle of *Tawḥīd,*

1. Allah is completely separate from His creation.

2. Creation neither surrounds Him nor is above Him in any way.

3. He, Allah, is above all things.

This is the classical conception of Allah according to the sources of Islam. It is very simple and firm, and leaves no room for the type of misconceptions which often lead to the worship of creation.

This view, however, does not deny that Allah's attributes operate throughout His creation. Nothing escapes His sight, His knowledge and His power. But just as it is considered a major advance in technology to be able to sit in the comfort of our homes and watch events taking place halfway around the world, Allah sees, hears and knows all that happens in the universe without having to be inside of it. Ibn 'Abbās is reported to have said,

> "In Allah's hand, the seven heavens, the seven earths, their contents as well as what is between them, is like a

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[30] Bishr (d. 833 CE) from Baghdad was a *Mu'tazilite* scholar of Jurisprudence and philosophy. (See *al-A'lām*, Beirut: al-'Ilm lil-Malāyeen, 7th ed., 1984, vol. 2, p. 55 by Khairuddeen az-Zirikli).

[31] Narrated by 'Abdur-Raḥmān ibn Abi Ḥātim and others. See *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 288.

mustard seed in one of your hands."[32]

And, just as remote-control T.V. is considered a great technological improvement over manual control, Allah's power operates unhindered within the smallest elements of creation without Him having to be there. In fact, the concept that Allah is within His creation is really a form of *shirk* in *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt* wherein Allah is given some of man's weaknesses. It is man who has to be present in the world for him to see, hear, know and affect what takes place in it.

Allah's knowledge and power, on the other hand, has no bounds. Man's very thoughts are totally exposed to Allah, and even the emotional workings of his heart are subject to Allah's control. This is the light in which the few verses that allude to Allah's closeness should be understood. For example, Allah (ﷻ) said,

﴿وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِۦ نَفْسُهُۥ ۖ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ ٱلْوَرِيدِ ﴿١٦﴾﴾ (سورة ق: ١٦)

"*Verily, We created man and know what his soul whispers, for We are closer to him than his jugular vein.*" (Qur'an 50: 16)

He (ﷻ) also said,

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ٱسْتَجِيبُوا۟ لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ۖ وَٱعْلَمُوٓا۟ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ ٱلْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِۦ وَأَنَّهُۥٓ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٢٤)

"*O' believers, respond to Allah and His messenger when*

[32] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 281.

they call you that which will give you life. And know well that Allah comes between a man and his heart. And to Him you will be gathered." (Qur'an 8: 24)

These verses should not be taken to mean that Allah is inside man at a point closer then his jugular vein or that He is inside man's heart changing its states. They simply mean that nothing escapes Allah's knowledge, even the innermost thoughts of humans, and nothing is beyond His power to control and change, even the emotions of the heart. As Allah (ﷻ) said,

﴿أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٧٧)

"*Don't they realize that Allah knows what they hide and what they expose.*" (Qur'an 2: 77)

﴿... وَٱذْكُرُوا۟ نِعْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنتُمْ أَعْدَآءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُم بِنِعْمَتِهِۦٓ إِخْوَٰنًا ... ﴿١٠٣﴾﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٠٢)

"... *[Remembers] when you were enemies and He put love between your hearts and by His blessings you became brothers...*" (Qur'an 3: 103)

And the Prophet (ﷺ) often used to pray saying,

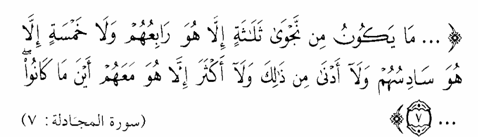
يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

"*Yā muqallib al-quloob* (O' Changer of hearts) *thabbit qalbi 'alā deenik* (steady my heart in Your Religion)."[33]

Similarly, verse like:

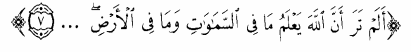
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[33] Collected by Tirmidhi and authenticated by Shaykh al-Albāni in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Tirmidhi*, vol. 3, p. 171, hadith no. 2792.



"*... There is not a secret consultation between three, but He is their fourth, nor between five but He is the sixth, nor between fewer nor more but He is in their midst wheresoever they may be...*" (Qur'an 58: 7)

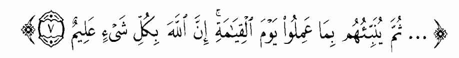
— should be understood according to their context. By reading the preceding segment of the same verse,



(سورة المجادلة : ٧)

"*Can you not see that Allah knows all that is in the heavens and on earth?...*" (Qur'an 58: 7)

And the concluding segment of the verse,



(سورة المجادلة : ٧)

"*... In the end He will tell them the truth of their conduct, on the Day of Judgement for Allah has full knowledge of all things.*" (Qur'an 58: 7)

It becomes clear that Allah is here referring to His knowledge and not the fact that His Supreme Being is present among men, for He is above and beyond His creation.[34]

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[34] Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusain al-Bayhaqi, *Kitāb al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt*. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmeeyah, 1st ed., 1984, Pp. 541-2).

As for the following statement which has been attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ),

"The heavens and earth cannot contain Allah,
but the heart of the true believer contains Him,"

— it is inauthentic. But, even if it were taken at face value, there is no way that a logical person could deduce from it that Allah is in man. If a believer's heart literally contains Allah, and the believer is contained within the heavens and earth, then Allah is contained by the heavens and earth. Because, if A is inside of B, and B is inside of C, then A must also be inside of C.

Therefore, according to the classical Islamic outlook based on the Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah, Allah is above the universe and its contents in a way which befits His majesty and He is not in anyway contained within His creation nor is it within Him, but His finite knowledge, mercy and power operate on every particle within it without any hindrance whatsoever.[35]

[35] 'Umar al-Ashqar, *al-'Aqīdah fī Allāh*, (Kuwait: Maktabah al-Falāh, 2nd ed., 1979, p. 171).

Chapter Nine

SEEING ALLAH

Allah's Image

As was stated previously, man's mind is limited and Allah is limitless, therefore man cannot hope to understand anything about Allah's attributes except what Allah chooses to reveal to him. If man tries to picture Allah in his mind he will only go astray, because Allah is different from anything man can conceive. Any image of God which man constructs in his mind will be from some part of creation, or a composite of created things which he has observed. Thus, if he pictures Allah in his mind, he ends up giving Allah the attributes of creation. It is, however, possible for man to intellectually and emotionally understand some of Allah's attributes. Hence, Allah has revealed some of them to man. For example, *al-Qādir*: the All-Powerful, means that there is nothing which Allah is unable to do. Similarly, *ar-Raḥmān*: the Most-Merciful, means there is nothing in creation which has not been blessed by Allah's mercy, whether they deserve it or not. Such understandings do not require any pictorial representations in the mind. Thus, it is only along these lines that the human mind may correctly conceive of Allah. A confused understanding of the boundaries within which Allah may be conceived by man was one of the factors which led the early Christians of Greece and Rome astray from the true teachings of Prophet Jesus. Europeans who

embraced Christianity put in their churches and shrines pictures and statues of God in the form of an old European patriarch with a long flowing white beard. Early Christians of Palestine came from a Jewish background which strictly, prohibited any pictorial representations of the Creator. Europeans, however, went astray in this respect due to a long historical tradition of representing their gods in human form and because of their dependence on the distorted scriptures of the Jews for religious guidance. In Genesis, the first book of the Torah, the Jews had written the following concerning man's creation.

> "Then God said, 'Let us make a man in our image, after our likeness', so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; (1:26-27)."

From these verses and others like them, early European Christians concluded that the scriptures taught that God looks like a man in the same way that they portrayed their mythological gods looking like men. Consequently, they expended much wealth, time and energy portraying God in human form in statues and paintings.

The practice of representing God in human form is, and has been, quite widespread. When man lost touch with divine revelation which taught that God was not similar to His creation, he began to direct his worship to creation. In doing so, he often chose to represent God in human form, as man was obviously the greatest living being on earth. Thus, for example, from the time of the Chou dynasty (1027 BC-402 CE) the official or state religion of China focussed upon the abstract diety "T'ien" (Heaven) who was given human form as "Yu Huang", Jade Emperor, Lord on High, ruler of the heavenly court.[1]

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[1] *Dictionary of Religion*, p. 85.

In the Qur'an Allah makes it very clear that nothing we can think of is like him. Allah (ﷻ) states,

﴿... لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَيْءٌۖ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾﴾

(سورة الشورىٰ: ١١)

"*... There is nothing like Him [Allah] but He sees and hears all.*" (Qur'an 42: 11)

And:

﴿وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ ﴿٤﴾﴾ (سورة الإخلاص: ٤)

"*There is none comparable to Him.*" (Qur'an 112: 4)

Prophet Mūsa asks to see Allah

After making it clear that He is not like His creation, Allah goes on to inform us that our eyes cannot grasp Him. He (ﷻ) said,

﴿لَّا تُدْرِكُهُ ٱلْأَبْصَـٰرُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ ٱلْأَبْصَـٰرَۖ ... ﴿١٠٣﴾﴾

(سورة الأنعام: ١٠٣)

"*Eyes cannot catch Him but He catches all eyes...*" (Qur'an 6: 103)

This divine statement points out that man is incapable of viewing the Divine Being.

In order to further emphasize this fact, Allah related in the Qur'an a pertinent incident from the life of Prophet Mūsa (Moses) (عليه السلام):

﴿وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَـٰتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُۥ رَبُّهُۥ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِىٓ أَنظُرْ إِلَيْكَۚ
قَالَ لَن تَرَىٰنِى وَلَـٰكِنِ ٱنظُرْ إِلَى ٱلْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ ٱسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُۥ فَسَوْفَ

تَرَىٰنِي فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُۥ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُۥ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا فَلَمَّآ
أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَٰنَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا۠ أَوَّلُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

(سورة الأعراف: ١٤٣)

"*And when Moses came out to appointed meeting place and his Lord spoke to him, he said: 'My Lord! Show me Yourself so that I may gaze upon You.' He replied: 'You will never see Me, but look at the mountain. If it remains in its place you will be able to see Me.' When his Lord revealed His glory to the mountain, it was crushed into dust, and Moses fell down unconscious. When he regained his consciousness he said: 'Glory be unto You! I turn to You repentant and I am the first of the true believers.'*" (Qur'an 7: 143)

Prophet Mūsa (عليه السلام) thought that he might be allowed to see God since Allah had preferred him over the rest of mankind of that time by choosing him to receive His message.[2] But, Allah made it very clear to him that it was not possible for him or anyone else. No man could bear the intensity of even seeing Allah's glory much less Allah's boundless being.[3] When the mountain disintegrated, Prophet Mūsa realized his error and begged Allah's forgiveness for requesting something which was not permitted.

Did Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) see Allah?

Some Muslims have felt that an exception was made in the case of the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (ﷺ), whom Allah caused to travel up through the heavens and go even beyond the

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[2] *(Qur'an 7: 144).*

[3] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 191.

point where angels were allowed to go. But when his wife, 'Ā'ishah (ﷺ), was asked by one of the *Tābi'ūn*[4] named Masrūq, if Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) has seen his Lord, she replied,

> "My hair is standing on end because of what you have asked! Whoever tells you that Muhammad saw his Lord has lied!"[5]

And when Abu Dharr (ﷺ) asked the Prophet (ﷺ) if he saw his Lord, the Prophet (ﷺ) replied,

> "There was only light, how could I see Him."[6]

The Prophet (ﷺ) on another occasion explained the significance of the light and that it was not Allah himself, saying,

> "Verily Allah does not sleep nor is it befitting for Him to sleep. He is the One who lowers the scales and raises them. The deeds of the night go up to Him before the deeds of the day and those of the day before those of the night, and His veil is light."[7]

Thus, it can be said with certainty that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), like the prophets before him, did not see Allah, the Most Great and Most Gracious, in this life. Based on this fact, the claim of those who are supposed to have seen Allah in this life is proven false. If the prophets, whom God has preferred over all of mankind, were unable to see Him, how could any man, no matter how righteous and pious he may be, see Him? The claim

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[4] The Followers — Students of the Prophet's Companions.

[5] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, Pp. 111-23, hadith nos. 337 & 339.

[6] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 113, hadith no. 341.

[7] Reported by Abu Mūsa al-Ash'ari and collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 113, hadith no. 343.

that one has seen God is, in fact, a statement of heresy and disbelief, because it implies that the one who makes such a claim is greater than the prophets.

Satan pretends to be Allah

There is no doubt that many of the mystics (*Sufis*) who claim to have seen Allah saw something. They often describe spectacular visions of light and possibly even unearthly beings. However, the fact that many mystics often discard basic practices of Islam after such visions shows clearly that what they are involved with is Satanic and not divine. Those who declare that they have seen God often claim that they no longer need to pray and fast regularly as common people do, because they have risen spiritually above the plane of the masses. Shaykh 'Abdul-Qādir al-Jeelāni (1077-1166 CE), after whom the Qādiri *Sufi* order is named, gave an account of an incident which he once experienced. This incident contains an explanation for both the visions of those who claim to have seen Allah, as well as the reason why they often discard basic Islamic practices after such vision, "One day," he said, "I was deeply involved in worship when all of a sudden I saw before me a grand throne with a brilliantly shining light surrounding it. A thunderous voice then struck my ears: 'O' 'Abdul-Qādir, I am you Lord! For you I have made lawful that which I have forbidden for others'." 'Abdul-Qādir asked, "Are you Allah besides whom there is no god?" When there was no answer, he said, "Get away. O' enemy of Allah." And with that, the light vanished and darkness blanketed him. The voice then said, "Abdul-Qādir, you have succeeded in defeating my strategy because of your understanding of the religion and your knowledge. I have managed to misguide over seventy saintly worshippers by such incidents." Afterwards, the

people asked 'Abdul-Qādir how he realized that it was Satan. He replied, "I recognize that it was Satan by his claim that Allah had made lawful for me what He had forbidden to others, because I knew that the divine law revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) could not be cancelled or changed. I also realized who it was when Satan announced that he was my Lord, but was unable to confirm that he was Allah who is without any partner."[8]

Similarly some people in the past have reported that they have seen the Ka'bah and circled it in visions. Others have reported that a great throne was stretched out before them with a glorious being seated on it and a large number of men were ascending and descending around it. They considered the men to be angels and the glorious being to be Allah, but in fact, it was Satan and his followers.[9]

Consequently, it may be assumed that the basis to claims to seeing Allah, either in dreams or in broad daylight, can be traced back to Satanic psychological and emotional states. In these states, Satan takes on glorious light forms and claims to those who are experiencing the visions that he is their Lord. Due to their ignorance of pure *Tawḥīd* they accept such claims and thereby go astray.

The meaning of *Sūrah an-Najm*

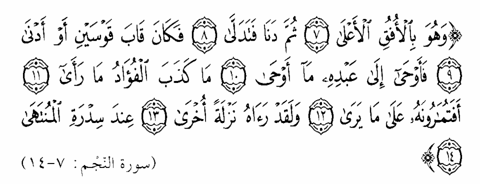
Some people[10] use the following verses in *Sūrah an-Najm* to support the claim that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) saw Allah.

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[8] Ibn Taymeeyah, *at-Tawassul wal-Wasīlah*, (Riyadh: Dār al-Iftā, 1984, p. 28).

[9] Ibid.

[10] Among them is an-Nawawi in his commentary on Muslim, vol. 3, p. 12., [See *Sharḥ Kitāb at-Tawḥīd min Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhari*, (Madīnah: Maktabah ad-Dār, 1985), Pp. 115-6, by 'Abdullah Āl Ghunaimān].


﴿وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ ﴿٨﴾ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ
﴿٩﴾ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ ﴿١٠﴾ مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ ﴿١١﴾
أَفَتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾ عِندَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنتَهَىٰ
﴿١٤﴾﴾ (سورة النجم: ٧-١٤)

"*When he was on the uppermost horizon. Then he came close and descended. Until he was two bow's lengths away or closer. And He revealed to His slave that which He revealed. The heart did not lie about what it saw. Will you argue with him about what he saw? And verily he saw him yet another time. By the lote-tree of the uppermost boundary.*" (Qur'an 53: 7-14)

They assert that these verses are in reference to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) seeing Allah. However, when Masrūq asked the Prophet's wife 'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها), about these verses she replied, "I was the first person from this Ummah (Muslim nation) to ask the Messenger of Allah about that and he replied:

> 'Verily it was Jibreel (Gabriel), may Allah's peace be on him. I never saw him in the form in which he was created except these two times; I saw him descending from the heavens and the greatness of his size filled all that was between the sky and the earth.'"
>
> 'Ā'ishah then said, "Haven't you heard that Allah, the Most High, said,
>
> "*Eyes cannot catch Him but He catches all eyes. He is the Subtle, the Aware?*"[11]
>
> And haven't you heard that Allah said,
>
> "*Allah will not speak to any man except by inspiration,*

[11] *(Qur'an 6: 103).*

or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger [Angel]?"[12] "[13]

Accordingly, the verses from *Sūrah an-Najm*, when considered in the light of the Prophet's own explanation, do not in any way support the mistaken belief that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) saw Allah.[14]

The wisdom behind not seeing Allah

If God could be seen in this life, the tests of this life would be pointless. What makes this life a real test is the fact that we are obliged to believe in Allah without actually seeing Him. If Allah were visible, everyone would believe in Him and all that the prophets taught. In fact, man would end up like angels, in total obedience to Allah. Because Allah made man to be higher than the angels, whose beliefs in Allah was without choice, man's choice of belief over disbelief had to be in a situation where Allah's existence could be questioned. Thus, Allah has kept himself hidden from mankind and will continue to do so until the last day.

Seeing Allah in the next life[15]

There are a number of instances in the Qur'an where Allah has stated plainly that humans will see Him in the next life. In

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[12] *(Qur'an 42: 51).*

[13] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, Pp. 111-12, hadith no. 337.

[14] The narration attributed to Ibn 'Abbās and collected by Ibn Khuzaymah in *Kitāb at-Tawḥīd* that the Prophet saw Allah with his eyes is *Ḍa'īf* (inauthentic) - see *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 197, ftn. 169.

[15] The main Muslim sects of the past which deny that Allah will be seen in the next life are the *Jahmites*, *Mu'tazilites* and their followers among the=

describing some of the events on the Day of Resurrection Allah (ﷻ) says,

﴿وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ ﴿٢٣﴾﴾ (سورة القيامة : ٢٢-٢٣)

"*On that day some faces will be bright. Looking at their Lord.*" (Qur'an 75: 22-23)

The Prophet (ﷺ) has been even more explanatory about this great event. When asked by some of his Companions, "Will we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection?" He replied,

> "Are you harmed by looking at the moon when it is full?" They replied, "No". He then said, "Verily you will see Him likewise."[16]

On another occasion he said,

> "Verily each one of you will see Allah on the day when you must meet Him, and there will not be between Him and you a veil nor a translator."[17]

Ibn 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) once said,

> "The day of Resurrection is the first day that any eye will look at Allah, the All-Great and All-Glorious."[18]

=*Khārijites*. In present times only the twelve *Shi'ites* continue to deny that man will see Allah in the next life. (See *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 189).

[16] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, Pp. 390-1, hadith no. 532 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 115, hadith no. 349.

[17] Reported by 'Adi ibn Abi Ḥātim and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, p. 403, hadith no. 535.

[18] An authentic narration collected by ad-Dāraqutni and ad-Dārimi in his book *ar-Radd 'alā al-Jahmīyah* (*Refutation of the Jahmites*), (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmi, n.d.) p. 57.

Seeing Allah (ﷻ) is a special added blessing for the people of Paradise. This additional favour is itself greater than all the other pleasures which Allah has in store for the righteous inheritors of the gardens of Paradise. Allah refers to this additional pleasure saying,

﴿لَهُم مَّا يَشَآءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيدٌ ۝٣٥﴾ (سورة قٓ: ٣٥)

"*For them is whatever they wish and there is with Us [something] additional.*" (Qur'an 50: 35)

Two of the Prophet's most notable Companions, 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib and Anas (may Allah be pleased with them), are reported to have explained that the additional thing which Allah referred to here is, looking at Him.[19] The Companion Ṣuhayb (ﷺ) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) recited (the verse):

> "*For those who do right is a good reward and [something] additional.*"[20] and said,
> "When the people deserving Paradise have entered it and those deserving Hell have entered it, a crier will call out, 'O' people of Paradise, Allah has a promise for you which He wishes to fulfil.' They will ask, 'What is it? Has He not made our scale (of good deeds) heavy, made our faces shining, put us in Paradise and extracted (some of) us from Hell?' The veil will then be removed and they will gaze at Him. Nothing which He has bestowed on them will be more dear to them than gazing at Him. And that is the (something) additional."[21]

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[19] Collected by aṭ-Ṭabari, see *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 190.

[20] *(Qur'an 10: 26).*

[21] Collected by Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah and Aḥmad.

As for the previously mentioned verse, "*Eyes cannot catch Him, but He catches all eyes*", it negates seeing Allah at all in this life, but in the next life, it only negates the possibility of seeing Allah in His totality. The righteous will only be able to see a part of Allah since their sight will still be the sight of finite created beings while Allah is and always will be the infinite uncreated Lord who can not be encompassed by sight, knowledge or power.[22] As for the disbelievers, they will not see Allah in the next life which will be a great deprivation and disappointment to them. Allah (ﷻ) said,

﴿كَلَّآ إِنَّهُمْ عَن رَّبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَحْجُوبُونَ ۝١٥﴾ (سورة المطففين: ١٥)

"*But on that Day they will be veiled from their Lord.*"
(Qur'an 83: 15)

Seeing Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

This is the other area of visions which has, to some degree, been a source of confusion and trials among Muslims. People claim to have seen the Prophet (ﷺ) and to have received special guidance from him. Some claim that their visions were in dreams while others claim to have actually seen him in a waking state. Those who make such claims are usually revered by the masses. They often introduce various religious innovations and attribute them to the Prophet (ﷺ). The basis of these claims rests on the hadith reported by Abu Hurayrah, Abu Qatādah and Jābir ibn 'Abdullah in which the Prophet (ﷺ) stated,

[22] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 188, 193, 198. See also *Sūrah Ṭāha* 20:110 where Allah, the Exalted says, ﴿They [man] cannot encompass Him with [their] knowledge﴾.

"He who saw me in a dream in fact saw me, for Satan can not assume my form."[23]

There is no doubt that this hadith is *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) and reliable, and thus cannot be denied or distrusted; but there are, however, some points which should be noted concerning its meaning.

a. The hadith confirms the fact that Satan can come in dreams in various forms and invite man to misguidance.
b. The hadith states that Satan cannot take the actual form or appearance of the Prophet (ﷺ).
c. The hadith also confirms the fact that the Prophet's form may be seen in dreams.

Since the Prophet (ﷺ) made this statement about dreams to his Companions, who were familiar with his appearance, it means that if one who knows exactly what the Prophet (ﷺ) looks like sees someone fitting that description in a dream, he could be sure that Allah had blessed him with a vision of the Prophet (ﷺ). That is because Allah has denied Satan the ability of taking the actual form of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, this also means that Satan can appear in dreams to those unfamiliar with the Prophet's appearance, and claim that he is Allah's Messenger. He may then prescribe religious innovations for the dreamer or inform him that he is *al-Mahdi* (the awaited reformer) or even Prophet 'Eesa (Jesus) (عليه السلام), who is to return in the last days. The number of individuals who have started religious innovations or made such claims, based on dreams, are countless. People are particularly inclined to accept such claims because of their misunderstanding

[23] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, p. 104, hadith no. 123 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1225, hadith no. 5635 and also p. 1226, hadith no. 5639.

of the implications of the above mentioned hadith. Since the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) is complete, the claim that the Prophet (ﷺ) has come in dreams with new additions must be false. Such a claim implies one of two things:

1. Either that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not fulfil his mission in his life time, or
2. That Allah was not aware of the future of the Ummah, and thus did not prescribe the necessary injunctions during the Prophet (ﷺ) life time.

Both of these implications contradict basic principles of Islam.

As for seeing the Prophet (ﷺ) in the waking state, such a claim goes beyond the boundaries of the hadith into the impossible. Any such visions which actually occur would no doubt be Satanic apparitions, regardless of the outcome. During the Prophet's miraculous night journey to Jerusalem and into the heavens, Allah did miraculously show him a number of the former prophets and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) communicated with them. Those who claim to see Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in the waking state, in fact, attempt to elevate themselves to his level. Any such innovations in the religion of Islam, whether based on visions of the Prophet (ﷺ) or otherwise, are totally unacceptable based on the many statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) prohibiting them. For example, 'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها) reported that Allah's Messenger said,

> "Whoever innovates in this affair of ours (i.e. Islam) something not belonging to it, will have it rejected."[24]

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[24] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 3, p. 535, hadith no. 861, Muslim, (Eng Trans.), vol. 3, p. 931, hadith no. 4266 and Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1294, hadith no. 4589.

Chapter Ten

SAINT WORSHIP

Allah's Favour

It is a part of man's nature to elevate some human beings over others. He likes to hold them in high esteem and prefers to follow them rather than make decisions on his own. This is a direct result of the fact that Allah has favoured some people over others, in various ways. Man has been placed over woman socially:

﴿ٱلرِّجَالُ قَوَّٰمُونَ عَلَى ٱلنِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ... ﴿٣٤﴾﴾

(سورة النِّساء: ٣٤)

"*Men are guardians of women by that which Allah favoured some of them over others...*" (Qur'an 4: 34)

﴿... وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ... ﴿٢٢٨﴾﴾ (سورة البَقَرَة: ٢٢٨)

"*... And men are one level over women...*" (Qur'an 2: 228)

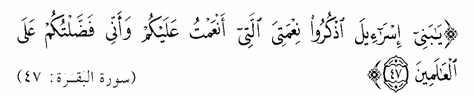
And some men have been placed over other men economically:

﴿وَٱللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِى ٱلرِّزْقِ ... ﴿٧١﴾﴾

(سورة النّحل: ٧١)

"*Allah has favoured some of you over others with sustenance...*" (Qur'an 16: 71)

The tribe of Israel was favoured over the rest of mankind by divine guidance:



"*Remember, O' Israel, the blessing which I bestowed on you by favouring you over all mankind.*" (Qur'an 2: 47)

The Prophets were favoured over all mankind by revelation and Allah (ﷻ) favoured some of the prophets over others:

﴿۞ تِلْكَ ٱلرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ... ﴿٢٥٣﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٢٥٣)

"*Those are the prophets of whom We favoured some over others...*" (Qur'an 2: 253)

Yet Allah (ﷻ) has told us not to desire the things by which He has favoured some of mankind over others:

﴿وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا۟ مَا فَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ بِهِۦ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ... ﴿٣٢﴾﴾

(سورة النساء: ٣٢)

"*Do not wish for that with which We have favoured some of you over others...*" (Qur'an 4: 32)

— because these favours are tests which carry with them great responsibilities. They are not a result of man's strivings, and, as such, should not be a source of pride. Allah will not give us a reward for having them, although we will be held to account for how we used them. Thus, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) advised us,

> "Look at those below you and not those above you. It is better for you, so that you do not deny Allah's blessings on you."[1]

Everyone has been placed above others in some way or another, and everyone has certain responsibilities for which he will be held accountable. The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Everyone of you is a shepherd, and everyone is responsible for his flock."[2]

These responsibilities are the basic components of the tests of this life. If we are thankful are the basic components of the tests of this life. If we are thankful to Allah for His favours and apply them justly, we succeed; otherwise, we fail. But, perhaps the greatest test of responsibility is that of Allah's favouring man over all creation. This favour was confirmed by Allah's command to the angels to prostrate to Adam and the responsibility is twofold:

a. It carries a personal responsibility of accepting Islam: total submission to Allah.
b. It also carries a group commitment of establishing Allah's law throughout the earth.

Thus, believers are far superior to disbelievers in Allah's sight because of their acceptance of their responsibilities. Allah (ﷻ) said:



﴿كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ... ﴿١١٠﴾﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١١٠)

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[1] Collected by both Bukhari and Muslim. See Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 8, p. 328, hadith no. 497 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1530, hadith no. 7070.

[2] Collected by Bukhari and Muslim. See Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 3, p. 438, hadith no. 730 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1017, hadith no. 4496.

"*You [believers] are the best of nations brought forth for the benefit of mankind [because] you command the good, prohibit evil and believe in Allah.*" (Qur'an 3: 110)

Taqwā

Among the community of believers, some are superior to others; and this superiority is a direct result of their own strivings. It is a superiority linked to *Eemān,* the strength and depth of faith. A living faith drives the one who possesses it to shield himself from whatever displeases Allah. This shield in Arabic is called *Taqwā.* It has been variously translated as "fear of God", "piety", as well as "God-consciousness"; and it carries all these meanings and more. Allah (ﷻ) clearly expressed the superiority of *Taqwā* as follows:

﴿... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ... ﴿١٣﴾﴾

(سورة الحجرات: ١٣)

"*Verily the most noble among you is the one with the most Taqwā.*" (Qur'an 49: 13)

Allah is here saying that the only factor which makes a believing man or woman truly superior to another is the level of *Taqwā.* It is this piety or fear of God which elevates man from the level of "thinking animal" to that of governor (*Khalīfah*) of the planet. The importance of the fear of Allah in a Muslim's life cannot be overstressed. Allah mentioned *Taqwā* and its derivatives 26 times in the Qur'an, everywhere emphasizing that *Taqwā* is the driving force behind living faith. Without it, faith is only a meaningless jumble of memorized words and phrases, and 'righteous' deeds are only shells of pretence and hypocrisy. Consequently, piety is preferred over all other considerations in all

of life's transactions. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> "A woman is married for four (reasons): her wealth, her nobility, her beauty, and her piety. Choose the pious one and be successful."[3]

No matter how beautiful, rich or well bred a woman might be, if she is not pious, she is inferior to a pious, ugly, poor woman from a dishonourable family. The converse is also true, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "If a man whose practise of the religion satisfies you, asks you for your daughter in marriage, you should marry them; otherwise there will be corruption in the land."[4]

The Prophet (ﷺ) once reprimanded Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) for derisively calling Bilal (رضي الله عنه), 'son of a black woman', then he went on to say,

> "Look! Surely you are not better than a brown man nor a black man except by fearing Allah more than them."[5]

This understanding was hammered home time and time again by Allah's Messenger (ﷺ). Even in the Farewell Pilgrimage, done shortly before he died, he lectured the people on the insignificance of racial differences and the all importance of *Taqwā.*

The most pious individuals are only known to Allah, because the sea of *Taqwā* is the heart. Man can only judge people by each other's outward deeds which may or may not be

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[3] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, Pp. 18-9, hadith no. 27 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 749, hadith no. 3457.

[4] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Tirmidhi.

[5] Reported by 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr and collected by Aḥmed.

misleading. Allah (ﷻ) made that abundantly clear in the following verse:

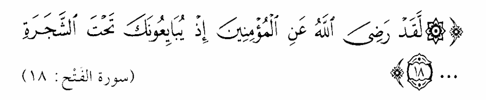


"*There is among people in this life, he whose speech will dazzle you. And he will call on Allah as a witness to what is in his heart; yet, he will be among the most vicious of enemies.*" (Qur'an 2: 204)

Therefore, it is not permissible for humans to designate certain people as being particularly saintly and pious to a degree beyond the reach of ordinary humans. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) specified among his Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) some whom he gave glad tidings of Paradise in this life.[6] However, such pronouncements were based on revelation and not his own ability to judge the hearts. For example, when the Prophet (ﷺ) said concerning those who make a pledge of allegiance known as *Bay'ah ar-Riḍwān*,

> "No one who made the pledge beneath the tree will enter the Hell-fire,"[7]

— he was confirming the Qur'anic verse revealed to that effect:



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[6] Among them are ten well known, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Ali, Ṭalḥah, az-Zubayr, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqās, Sa'īd ibn Zayd, 'Abdur-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jārrāh. See *al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, Pp. 485-7.

[7] Reported by Jābir and collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1034, hadith no. 4576.

"*Allah is pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you beneath the tree...*" (Qur'an 48: 18)

Similarly, he judged some whom everyone thought were destined to Paradise to be among those destined for the Hell-fire. All such judgements were based on revelation. Ibn 'Abbās (ﷺ) said that he was told by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ﷺ) that,

> "On the day of (the battle) of Khaybar, some of the Prophet's Companions came and said, 'So and so is a martyr and so and so is a martyr,' but when they came to a man about whom they said, 'So and so is a martyr,' Allah's Messenger declared, 'By no means! I have seen him in Hell in a cloak which he took (from the spoils) dishonestly.' Allah's Messenger then said, 'Go, Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and announce among the people three times that only the believers will enter Paradise.'"[8]

In Christian tradition down through the ages, some individuals were highly praised for their supposed spiritual achievements. Miracles were attributed to them and the rank of "saint" was bestowed on them. In pre-Christian, Hindu and Buddhist tradition, teachers who were supposed to have climbed the ladder of spiritual excellence and who had performed supernatural feats were also given titles like *Guru, Avatar,* etc., indicating spiritual superiority. These designations have led the masses to either seek intercession through them or to worship them as gods. Consequently, these religious traditions have lists of saints to whom the masses fervently pray. Islam, on the other hand, opposes even the excessive praise of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) who said,

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[8] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 65, hadith no. 209.

"Do not praise me excessively as the Christians did to 'Eesa ibn Maryam, verily I am only a slave, so call me instead the slave of Allah and His Messenger."[9]

Wali: The "Saint"

The term saint has been used to translate the Arabic word *Wali* (pl. *Awliyā*) which Allah used to designate those who are close to Him. But, a more appropriate translation is "close friend" because *Wali* literally means an "ally." Allah (ﷻ) even uses it to refer to Himself in the verse:

﴿ٱللَّهُ وَلِيُّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِ ... ﴿٢٥٧﴾﴾ (سورة البَقَرَة: ٢٥٧)

"*Allah is the Wali of those who believe and takes them from the darkness into light...*" (Qur'an 2: 257)

﴿... وَٱللَّهُ وَلِيُّ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾﴾ (سورة آل عِمرَان: ٦٨)

"*... Allah is the Wali of those who have faith.*" (Qur'an 3: 68)

﴿... فَٱللَّهُ هُوَ ٱلْوَلِيُّ ... ﴿٩﴾﴾ (سورة الشّورىٰ: ٩)

"*... But Allah — He is the Wali...*" (Qur'an 42: 9)

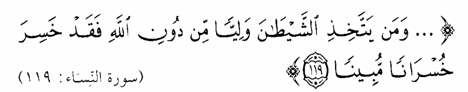
﴿... وَٱللَّهُ وَلِيُّ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩﴾﴾ (سورة الجاثِيَة: ١٩)

"*... Allah is the Wali of the righteous.*" (Qur'an 45: 19)

He (ﷻ) also uses it to refer to Satan as in the verse:

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[9] Reported by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and collected by Bukhari and Muslim. See Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 4, p. 435, hadith no. 654.



"*... Whoever takes Satan as a Wali instead of Allah, has clearly lost all.*" (Qur'an 4: 119)

﴿... إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا ٱلشَّيَٰطِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ ... ﴿٢٧﴾﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٢٧)

"*... We made Shayāṭīn awliyā'...*" (Qur'an 7: 27)

﴿... إِنَّهُمُ ٱتَّخَذُوا۟ ٱلشَّيَٰطِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ ... ﴿٣٠﴾﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٣٠)

"*... They took Shayāṭīn awliyā'...*" (Qur'an 7: 30)

This term also means "close relative" as in the following verse:

﴿... فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لِوَلِيِّهِۦ سُلْطَٰنًا فَلَا يُسْرِف فِّى ٱلْقَتْلِ ... ﴿٣٣﴾﴾
(سورة الإسراء: ٣٣)

"*... We have given power to the Wali of whoever is wrongly killed, but do not be excessive in the execution [of the murderer]...*" (Qur'an 17: 33)

It is also used in the Qur'an to indicate closeness between men, for example,

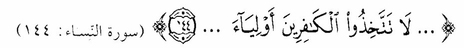
﴿لَّا يَتَّخِذِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ مِن دُونِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ... ﴿٢٨﴾﴾

(سورة آل عمران: ٢٨)

"*The believers should not take the disbelievers as awliyā' instead of other believers...*" (Qur'an 3: 28)

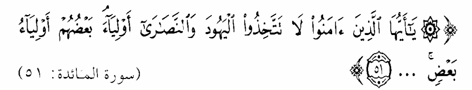
﴿ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ ... ﴿١٣٩﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٣٩)

"*Those who take disbelievers for awliyā'...*"
(Qur'an 4: 139)


﴿ ... لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ ... ﴿١٤٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٤٤)

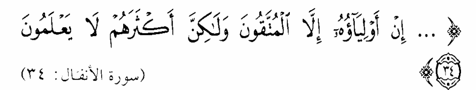
"*... Take not for awliyā' the disbelievers...*"

(Qur'an 4: 144)


﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ... ﴿٥١﴾ ﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٥١)

"*O' you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your awliyā', they are but awliyā' to each other...*" (Qur'an 5: 51)

But the usage which concerns us most is "*Awliyā-Allāh*" close friends of Allah. In the Qur'an Allah has designated among mankind certain types of individuals whom He considers especially close to Himself. Allah's description of His *Walis* can be found in *Sūrah al-Anfāl* where Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) states:


﴿ ... إِنْ أَوْلِيَاؤُهُ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقُونَ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٣٤)

"*... Verily His [Allah's] awliyā' are only those with Taqwā, but most people do not realize that.*"

(Qur'an 8: 34)

And in *Sūrah Younus*:


﴿ أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ﴾ (سورة يونس: ٦٢-٦٣)

"*Behold! Certainly no fear nor grief shall overcome that Awliyā of Allah, those who believe and have Taqwā.*"

(Qur'an 10: 62-63)

Allah explains for us that the criterion for "*Walāyah*" (divine friendship) is *Eemān* (faith) and *Taqwā* (piety) and these qualities are shared by all true believers.[10] Among the ignorant masses, the main criterion for *Walāyah* ("Sainthood") is the performance of miracles which are commonly called *Karāmāt* to distinguish them from the miracles — *Mu'jizāt* — of the prophets. To most who hold this belief, the faith and practice of the "miracle" worker are of no consequence. Hence, some who have been designated "saints" held heretical beliefs and practices, while others were known to have abandoned the religious rituals, and, yet others were even involved in licentious and vulgar behaviour. However, nowhere has Allah made the working of miracles a stipulation for being His *Wali.* Therefore, as earlier stated, all believers who have *Eemān* and *Taqwā* are *Walis* of Allah and He is their *Wali,* as Allah Himself said,

﴿ٱللَّهُ وَلِيُّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ... ﴿٢٥٧﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٥٧)

"*Allah is the Wali of those who believe...*" (Qur'an 2: 257)

Consequently, Muslims are not allowed to designate certain believers as being *Awliyā'* of Allah and not others. In spite of this clear Islamic position, a hierarchy of so-called Muslim saints has become a prominent feature in *Sufi* circles and among the masses who blindly follow them. In ascending order of merit they are: the *Akhyār* (chosen) who number 300; the *Abdāl* (substitutes) numbering 40; the 7 *Abrār* (pious); the 4 *Awtād* (pegs); the 3 *Nuqabā* (watchmen), the *Qutb* (pole) who is considered the greatest saint of his time, and at the top of the list is the *Ghawth* (Succor), the greatest of Saints, who is believed, in some circles, to be capable of taking on his shoulders a portion of the sins of the

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[10] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 358.

believers. According to the belief of "mystics", the saints of the top three classes are present invisibly in Makkah at the hours of prayer. When the *Ghawth* dies, the *Qutb* replaces him and there is a moving up all through the series, the purest soul of each class rising to the next degree.[11] This body of mythology has been borrowed from Christianity, just as *Dhikr* beads were adopted from the Christian rosary, and *Mawlid* from the Christian celebration of Christmas.

Fanā: The union of man with God

A close look at various lists of the most prominent so-called saints, reveals names like that of al-Ḥallāj who was publicly executed as an apostate for daring to openly claim divinity in his infamous pronouncement "*Anal-Ḥaqq*", 'I am the Reality', when Allah (ﷻ) already said:

﴿ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُۥ يُحْىِ ٱلْمَوْتَىٰ ... ۝٦﴾

(سورة الحج: ٦)

"*That is so, because Allah is the Reality and it is He Who gives life to the dead...*" (Qur'an 22: 6)

What led this deranged individual to make such a pronouncement was his belief in a principle very similar to the ultimate state of being in Buddhism known as "*Nirvana*".[12] In this state, according

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[11] Encyclopedia of Islam, p. 629. See also 'Ali ibn 'Uthmān al-Hajweeri, *Kashf al-Mahjoob*, trans. by Nicholson, (London: Luzac, rep. 1976), p. 214.

[12] Sanskrit term meaning "blown out" referring to the extinction of all wordly desires, or salvation. Though the term originated in Vedantic (*Bhagavad Gita* and the *Vedas*) it is most often associated with Buddhism. In *Hinayana* Buddhism the term is equated with extinction while in *Mahayana* Buddhism it is a state of bliss (W.L. Resse, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980, p. 393).

to a branch of Buddhist thought, the ego disappears and the human soul and consciousness are extinguished.[13]

This concept also forms the core of a philosophy known as "mysticism." Mysticism[14] is defined as an experience of union with God and the belief that man's main goal lies in the seeking that union. The origins of mysticism can be found in the writings of ancient Greek philosophers like *Plato's Symposium* in which mention is made of various ladders of ascent, composed of steep and hard steps, whereby a union of the soul with God is finally attained.[15] A parallel concept can also be found in Hinduism's identification of *Ātmā* (human soul) with *Brahma* (the impersonal Absolute), the realization of which is the ultimate goal or release from existence and rebirth.[16] Greek mystic thought blossomed in the Gnostic Christian movements which, like that of Valentinus (c. 140 CE), reached their peak in the second century CE. These trends were combined in the third century with Platonism by the Egypto-Roman philosopher, Plotinus (205-270 CE), to form a religious philosophy known as *neoplatonism*. Christian anchorites or hermits of the 3rd century CE, who began the monastic tradition in Christendom by withdrawing into the Egyptian desert, adopted the mystic goal of union with God as it was propounded in neoplatonic thought at that time, within a framework of meditative and ascetic practices of self-denial. Although it was "St." Pachomius (290-346 CE) who established the first set of rules for Christian monasticism and founded nine monasteries in the Egyptian desert; "St." Benedict of Nursia (480-547 CE), in

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[13] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 72.

[14] From the Greek "*Mystes*" meaning "one initiated into the mysteries." The term is derived from the Greek mystery religions whose initiates bore the name "*mystes*" (*Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 374).

[15] *Colliers Encyclopedia*, vol. 17, p. 114.

[16] *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 68.

developing the Benedictine Rule for the monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy, came to be regarded as the real founder of Western monastic order.[17] The mystic tradition kept alive in monastic Christianity began to find expression among Muslims from about 8th century CE, a century after the borders of the Islamic state had expanded to include Egypt and Syria and its major centres of monasticism.[18] A group of Muslims who were not satisfied with what the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) had to offer, developed a parallel system which they named the *Ṭarīqah* (the way). Just as the ultimate goal of the Hindu was unity with the world soul and of the Christian mystic union with God; the ultimate goal of this movement became *Fanā,* the dissolution of the ego, and *Wuṣool,* the meeting and unification of the human soul with Allah in this life. A series of preliminary stages and state which had to be attained were defined. They were called *Maqāmāt* (stations) and *Ḥālāt* (states). A system of spiritual exercises was also designed for the initiate in order to bring about this "meeting." These exercises of *Dhikr* [19] often involved head and body movements and sometimes even dance, as in the case of

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[17] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, Pp. 365-6 and 374.

[18] The authors of treatises on Muslim mysticism have often compared the "annihilation" of *Sufism* with Buddhist *Nirvana*; but according to others this comparison is entirely inadequate as the Buddhist idea of annihilation is independent of the idea of God and includes the idea of transmigration of souls, to which *Nirvana* puts an end. In Muslim mysticism on the other hand, there is no question of the passing of soul upon death into another body and the notion of a personal and all-present God is throughout predominant. The origin of the Muslim conception of *Fanā* has rather to be sought in Christianity from which it seems to be borrowed. This conception simply means the annihilation of the individual human will before the will of God, an idea which forms the centre of all Christian mysticism. (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 98).

[19] *Dhikr*, which normally means the rememberance of God, in mystic circles, is used to refer to the continuous repetition of God's names and attributes.

whirling dervishes. All of these practices were attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) through chains of narration in order to validate them, but there does not exist any authentic support for them in any of the classical books of hadith. A multiplicity of systems evolved, and orders, similar to those among Christian monks, appeared named after their founders, like the *Qādiri, Chishti, Naqshabandi,* and *Teejāni* orders. Along with that, volumes of legends and fairy tales were spun around the founders and the outstanding personalities of these orders. And, just as Christian and Hind monks chose special isolated structures (i.e. monasteries) in which to house their communities, the *Sufi* orders developed similar housing schemes called *Zāwiyahs* (lit. corners).

In time, a body of heretic creeds developed out of the mystic "union-with-God" belief. For example, most orders claimed that Allah could be seen when the state of *Wuṣool* (arrival) was achieved. Yet when 'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها) asked the Prophet (ﷺ) if he saw Allah during *Mi'rāj* (ascension) he replied that he had not.[20] Prophet Mūsa (عليه السلام) was also shown that neither he nor any man could withstand seeing Allah in this life by Allah revealing some of His being to a mountain which crumbled to dust during the revelation.[21] Some *Sufi* adepts claimed that when the state of *Wuṣool* was attained, the mundane obligations of Shari'ah like five times daily *Ṣalāh,* were no longer obligatory. Most of them prescribed that prayers to Allah could be sent through the Prophet (ﷺ) or through the co-called saints; many also began the practice of making *Ṭawāf*,[22] animal sacrifices and other acts of worship around the shrines and tombs of the saints. *Ṭawāf* can be

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[20] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, Pp. 111-12, hadith nos. 3337, 339 and p. 113, hadith no. 341.

[21] *(Qur'an 7: 143).*

[22] Walking around an object of religious devotion.

observed today around the grave of Zaynab and Sayyid al-Badawi in Egypt, around the tomb of Muhammad Aḥmad (the *Mahdi*) in Sudan, and around the Dargahs of countless saints and holy men in India and Pakistan.

The Shari'ah came to be looked at as the outer path designed for the ignorant masses, while the *Ṭarīqah* was the inner path of an elite enlightened few. Opinionated *Tafsīr* appeared in which the meanings of the Qur'anic verses were bent and twisted to support the heretical ideas of the mystic movement. Greek philosophical thought was also blended with fabricated hadiths to produce a body of inauthentic literature which challenged the early Islamic classics and eventually displaced them among the masses. Music was introduced in most circles and drugs like marijuana could be found in others as a means of heightening the pseudo-spiritual experience which they all sought. Such was the legacy of the latter generation of *Sufis* which had been built on the false premise that union of the human soul with Allah was attainable. The early generation of pious individuals, like 'Abdul-Qādir Jeelāni, and others to whom some orders were attributed, clearly understood the importance of distinguishing between the Creator and the created. The two could never become one, as One was Divine and Eternal, while the other was human and finite.

The union of God with man

Nothing escapes Allah's knowledge, therefore, the wise are those who act accordingly. They feel His presence at all times. They carefully perform all their obligatory (*Farḍ*) duties, then they piously try to make up for any of the inevitable deficiencies by doing a host of voluntary acts. These voluntary acts help to protect the obligatory duties. For example, during times of

weakness or spiritual lows, one may become lax in fulfilling one's religious duties. However, those who had voluntary practices would likely neglect some of their voluntary practices, while keeping their obligatory duties intact. If they did not have a protective shield of voluntary acts and they fell into a period of spiritual laziness, some of their obligatory duties are likely to be discarded or neglected. The more someone strengthens his obligatory practices by performing voluntary acts, the more his life conforms to the Shari'ah, the will of Almighty Allah. Allah conveyed this principle through the Prophet (ﷺ) in a hadith saying:

> "The most beloved thing with which My slave may come close to Me is that which I have made obligatory (*Farḍ*) on him. My servant will continue to come closer to Me by voluntary acts (of worship) until I love him. If I love him, I will be his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he grasps, and his foot by which he walks. If he asks Me anything I would give it and if he seeks refuge in Me I would protect him."[23]

This *Wali* of Allah would only hear, see, grasp and walk to what is *ḥalāl* (lawful), while conspicuously avoiding all the *ḥarām* (prohibited) as well as that which leads towards it. This is the only true goal worthy of dedicating one's life. Its attainment is the perfection of man's dual role as servant of God and governor of the world. But, it cannot be reached except by the route prescribed in the hadith. First the compulsory duties have to be completely established, then the prescribed voluntary acts of worship have to be performed consistently and according to the

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[23] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 8, p. 336-7, hadith no. 509.

Sunnah. Allah (ﷻ) emphasized this fact by telling His Prophet (ﷺ) to inform the believers:

﴿قُلْ إِن كُنتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ ٱللَّهَ فَٱتَّبِعُونِى يُحْبِبْكُمُ ٱللَّهُ ... ﴿٣١﴾﴾

(سورة آل عمران: ٣١)

"*Say, if you love Allah, follow me [i.e., Muhammad] and Allah will love you...*" (Qur'an 3: 31)

Therefore Allah's love can only be attained by strictly following the directives (Sunnah) of His Apostle (ﷺ) and by carefully avoiding all innovations in religious matters. This formula is contained in the following hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported by Abu Najeeh to have said,

> "Keep to my Sunnah and that of the rightly guided Caliphs. Bite on to it with your molars. And beware of innovations, for verily they are all heresy (*bid'ah*) and heresy is misguidance which leads to the Hell-fire."[24]

One who strictly follows this principle will only listen to what Allah wishes for him to listen to. For Allah (ﷻ) said describing the righteous:

﴿... وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ ٱلْجَـٰهِلُونَ قَالُوا۟ سَلَـٰمًا ﴿٦٣﴾﴾

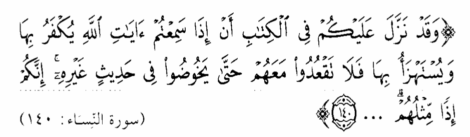
(سورة الفرقان: ٦٣)

"... *And when the ignorant [mockingly] address them, they merely say: 'Peace.'*" (Qur'an 25: 63)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an He (ﷻ) also said,

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[24] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1294, hadith no. 4590 and Tirmidhi.


﴿وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا مِثْلُهُمْ ... ﴿١٤٠﴾﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٤٠)

"He has already revealed to you in the Book, that when you hear the signs of Allah denied and ridiculed, you should not sit with them unless they change the subject. If you did you would be like them..." (Qur'an 4: 140)

By him listening only to what Allah wishes for him to hear, Allah has metaphorically become his hearing. In a similar way, Allah becomes his sight, hands and feet.

This is the correct interpretation of the previously mentioned hadith in which Allah states that He will become man's hearing, sight, hands and feet. Unfortunately, this hadith has been misinterpreted by mystics as support for the concept of union with Allah — May Allah forbid.

Rooḥullāh: The "Spirit" of Allah

Support for the mystic belief in the re-unification of the human soul with Allah has also been falsely deduced from some of the verses of the Qur'an itself. The following verses in which Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ ... ﴿٩﴾﴾ (سورة السجدة: ٩)

"Then He [Allah] fashioned him [Adam] and blew in him from His spirit..." (Qur'an 32: 9, 38: 72)

And:

﴿فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي ... ﴿٢٩﴾﴾ (سورة الحجر: ٢٩)

"*When I fashioned him and blew into him of My Spirit ...*" (Qur'an 15: 29, 38: 72)

— have been used as evidence for the belief that every human being contains within his body a part of God. The portion of Allah's "spirit" which Allah breathed into Adam has supposedly been inherited by all of his descendants. Reference has also been made to Prophet 'Eesa (ﷺ) about whose mother Allah (ﷻ) said,

﴿وَٱلَّتِىٓ أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِن رُّوحِنَا ... ﴿٩١﴾﴾ (سورة الأنبياء: ٩١)

"*She was chaste, so We blew into her from Our Spirit...*" (Qur'an 21: 91, 66: 12)

Thus, it is believed among mystics that this divine eternal spirit within man yearns to reunite with its origin from whence it came. However, this is not the case. Possessive pronouns (my, your, his, her, our) in Arabic, as in English, have two general meanings depending on the context in which they are used. They may describe an attribute or a possession which is or is not a part of its owner. For example, in Allah's command to Prophet Mūsa (ﷺ):

﴿وَٱضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوٓءٍ ... ﴿٢٢﴾﴾ (سورة طه: ٢٢)

"*Put your hand inside your shirt and it will come out shining unharmed...*" (Qur'an 20: 22)

— both the "hand" and "shirt" belonged to Prophet Mūsa but his hand was an attribute which was a part of him, while his shirt was a possession which was not a part of him. The same is the case relative to God with regards to His attributes and His creation.[25]

[25] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, Pp. 84-5.

For example, in the case of divine mercy wherein He (ﷻ) says:

﴿... وَٱللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِۦ مَن يَشَآءُ ... ﴿١٠٥﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١٠٥)

"*... Allah give His mercy specifically to whomsoever He wishes...*" (Qur'an 2: 105)

Allah's mercy is one of his attributes and not a part of His creation. On the other hand, Allah sometimes refers to created things as "His" to emphasize the fact that He created them. Yet others are referred to as His to indicate the special position of honour with which He views them. For example, with respect to the she-Camel sent as a test to Prophet Ṣāliḥ's people, the Thamood, Allah (ﷻ) quoted Prophet Ṣāliḥ (ﷺ) as saying,

﴿... هَٰذِهِۦ نَاقَةُ ٱللَّهِ لَكُمْ ءَايَةً فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِىٓ أَرْضِ ٱللَّهِ ... ﴿٧٣﴾﴾

(سورة الأعراف: ٧٣)

"*... This is Allah's camel sent to you as a sign. So allow it to graze in Allah's earth...*" (Qur'an 7: 73)

The camel was miraculously sent as a sign to the Thamood who did not have any right to deny it from grazing, because the whole earth belongs to Allah. Similarly is the case of the Ka'bah about which Allah (ﷻ) made a covenant with Prophets Ibrahīm (Abraham) and Ismā'eel (Ishmael) (may peace be upon them):

﴿... أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِىَ لِلطَّآئِفِينَ وَٱلْعَٰكِفِينَ وَٱلرُّكَّعِ ٱلسُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٥﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١٢٥)

"*... That they may purify My house for those who circle it, cling to it, bow down prostrate [near it].*"

(Qur'an 2: 125)

— and Paradise in the case of the righteous who on the Day of Judgement will be told by Allah (ﷻ): "*Enter My Paradise.*"[26]

As for the spirit (*Rooḥ*), it is one of Allah's creations. Allah states in the Qur'an,

﴿وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلرُّوحِ ۖ قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٨٥)

"*They ask you concerning the spirit, tell them the Spirit is from my Lord's command; and you have not been given except a very small amount of knowledge.*"
(Qur'an 17: 85)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an He (ﷻ) said:

﴿... إِذَا قَضَىٰٓ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُۥ كُن فَيَكُونُ ﴿٤٧﴾﴾

(سورة آل عمران: ٤٧)

"*... If Allah has decided a thing, He only has to command: Be, and it is.*" (Qur'an 3: 47)

And He (ﷻ) also said:

﴿... خَلَقَهُۥ مِن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُۥ كُن فَيَكُونُ ﴿٥٩﴾﴾

(سورة آل عمران: ٥٩)

"*He [Allah] created him [Adam] from clay then said: Be, and he was...*" (Qur'an 3: 59)

The command is "be" for all of creation. Therefore, the spirit is created by Allah's command. Islam does not consider God to be an incorporeal Spirit, as do some religions like Christianity.

[26] *(Qur'an 89: 30).*

He has neither corporeal body nor is He a formless spirit. He has a form befitting His majesty, the like of which no man has ever seen or conceived, and which will only be seen (to the degree of man's finite limitations) by the people of Paradise.[27] Consequently, when Allah refers to the blowing of a spirit from Himself into Prophets Adam and 'Eesa, special honour is given to their created spirits due to the prominence of Prophet Adam's position in relation to the rest of mankind and to clarify the confusion concerning Maryam's virgin birth of Prophet 'Eesa. Even Allah's attribution of the act of blowing to Himself is, in fact, a clarification of His will and supreme power, for it is the angels who actually insert and extract the souls into man. This fact is evident from the following hadith of Ibn Mas'ūd who reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said,

> "Verily, your creation is combined in your mother's womb for forty days in the form of an oily fluid, then as a leach-like clot for a similar period and as a clump of flesh for another similar period. Then an angel is sent to him to blow the spirit into him..."[28]

Thus, Allah has the spirit blown into every human by one of His angels. By saying that 'He blew', Allah in fact reminds us that He is the primary cause of all that takes place in creation, as He said:

﴿وَٱللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾﴾ (سورة الصَّافات: ٩٦)

"*Allah created you and whatever you do.*"

(Qur'an 37: 96)

[27] See the Chapter 9 *Seeing Allah*, of this work for further detail on this point.

[28] Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 4, Pp. 290-1, hadith no. 430 and Muslim, (Eng Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1391, hadith no. 6390.

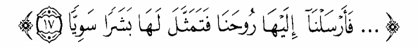
Just prior to the battle of Badr the Prophet (ﷺ) threw a handful of dust at the enemy ranks assembled hundreds of yards away, but Allah caused some of the dust particles to miraculously reach all of the eyes of the enemy. Allah (ﷻ) referred to the Prophet's action as follows:

﴿ ... وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ رَمَىٰ ... ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

(سورة الأنفال: ١٧)

"... *It was not you that threw when you threw but it was Allah Who threw...*" (Qur'an 8: 17)

Thus, by attributing the Spirit to Himself, Allah simply gave it a special place of honour among the spirits which He has created. Not that He, Allah, has a spirit and blew off a piece of it into both Prophet Adam and Prophet 'Eesa. To further emphasize that point Allah also refers to the Angel sent to inform Maryam as "His spirit":



﴿ ... فَأَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

(سورة مريم: ١٧)

"... *So we sent to her Our Spirit who took the appearance of a well formed man.*" (Qur'an 19: 17)

The Qur'an is a totality. Its verses explain themselves and the sayings and practices of the Prophet (ﷺ) further clarify its meanings. When verses are taken out of context, the meanings of the Qur'an can easily be distorted. For example, verse four of *Sūrah al-Mā'oon* reads:

﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٤﴾ ﴾ (سورة الماعون: ٤)

"*Woe be on those who make prayer [Ṣalāh].*"

(Qur'an 107: 4)

This verse by itself is in total contradiction to the rest of the Qur'an and Islam. *Ṣalāh* has been made obligatory throughout the Qur'an, For example, Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿إِنَّنِيٓ أَنَا ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنَا۠ فَٱعۡبُدۡنِي وَأَقِمِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ لِذِكۡرِيٓ ١٤﴾ (سورة طه: ١٤)

"*Verily I am Allah, there is no god besides me, so worship me and establish prayer [Ṣalāh] in order to remember Me.*" (Qur'an 20: 14)

Yet this verse curses those who make *Ṣalāh!* However, the verses which follow it clarify the intended meanings as:



"*Those who are negligent in their Ṣalāh, who do it to be seen. Yet they refuse even the simplest of kindness.*"

(Qur'an 107: 5-7)

Thus, Allah's curse is on the *Ṣalāh* of the hypocrites who pretend belief and not on all who make *Ṣalāh.*

A more meaningful translation of the verse "*Then He fashioned him (Adam) and blew into him from His spirit,*" would be "*Then He fashioned him and caused one of His [noble] spirits to enter him*". Consequently, there is no basis in the divine scriptures for the mystic belief in the uncreated soul of man, yearning to re-unite with its origin, God. In Islam, there is no distinction between the Arabic terms *Rooḥ* (spirit — pl. *Arwāḥ*) and *Nafs* (soul — pl. *Anfus*) with respect to man except that when

it is connected to the body it is usually referred to as a *Nafs* [29]. In the Qur'an, God states:

﴿ٱللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى ٱلْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَٱلَّتِى لَمْ تَمُتْ فِى مَنَامِهَا ... ﴿٤٢﴾﴾ (سورة الزُّمَر: ٤٢)

"*It is Allah who takes the souls [Anfus] at death and those which do not die [He takes] during their sleep...*"
(Qur'an 39: 42)

The Prophet (ﷺ) is reported by Umm Salamah to have said,

> "Verily, when the spirit (*Rooḥ*) is taken the eyes follow it."[30]

The successful souls will be made to enter Paradise as Allah said to the righteous souls:



"*O' soul [Nafs] at peace, come back to your Lord pleased with yourself and pleasing to Him. Enter among My devotees. Enter My Paradise.*" (Qur'an 89: 27-30)

Thus, in the end, the righteous human soul will not become extinguished in God nor unite with His supreme being, but will remain a finite spirit reunited with a finite body enjoying the pleasures of Paradise for as long as Allah wishes.

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[29] *Al-'Aqīdah aṭ-Ṭaḥāwiyah*, p. 394.

[30] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 437, hadith no. 2005.

Chapter Eleven

GRAVE WORSHIP

Throughout much of human history, honouring the dead through elaborate burial rites, ornate tombs and decorated graves, along with festivals of commemoration and adoration has led to great confusion and misguidance in religion. As a result, much of mankind has become involved in some form of grave worship. In fact, the religion of most Chinese, who represent approximately a third to a quarter of mankind, is ancestor worship. Most of their religious rites are connected with graves and the worship of representations of their ancestors.[1] The graves of holy or saintly men among Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, have become shrines where rites of worship like prayer, sacrifice and pilgrimage are performed on a large scale. With the passage of time, Muslim rulers and the masses strayed away from the fundamental principles of the Islamic creed and began to imitate the pagan practices of the non-Islamic nations around them. Huge

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[1] The veneration of ancestors (*Pai Tsu*) is one of the most ancient, persistent, and influential themes in Chinese religion and traditional Chinese society. According to their beliefs, the *Hun* (spiritual soul) and the *P'o* (gross soul) of the dead are dependent for their survival and happiness upon the offerings of spirit money, incense, food and drink made by their descendants. In return, the *Hun* soul, as a spirit (*Shen*), can achieve considerable benefits for the family by means of its supernatural contacts. In the case of ordinary beings this relationship is only considered to last for three to five generations. The souls are then succeeded by more recent ones. (*Dictionary of Religions*, p. 38).

edifices were built over the grave of the *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions of the Prophet) like 'Ali, major jurists like Imam Abu Ḥaneefah and Imam ash-Shāfi'i, and those designated as *Sufi* "saints" like Junayd and 'Abdul-Qādir Jeelāni. In more recent times this practice of building shrines included even the graves of leaders of social movements like Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and Muhammad Aḥmed, the so-called *Mahdi* of the Sudan. Today many ignorant Muslims travel vast distances in order to perform religious rites of *ṭawāf* around these tombs. Some even make prayer inside and outside of them, and other 'piously' bring sacrificial animals to these cursed sites in order to perform the rites of *dhabh* (ritual sacrifice) there. Most of those who perform rites of worship at graves hold the false belief that the righteous among these dead people are so close to Allah that all acts of worship done in their vicinity will more likely be accepted by Allah than if they were done elsewhere. That is, since these dead individuals were blessed, all that is near them must also be blessed. Their tombs and even the land on which they are built must be permeated with the overflow of their surplus blessing. Because of this belief, grave-worshippers often wipe the walls of graves, then wipe it on themselves in order to collect extra blessings. Often they collect the earth in the vicinity of the graves, in the vain belief that the earth has special healing powers due to the effect of the blessings manifest in those buried there. Many among certain branches of the *Shi'ites* collect clay from Karbala, where Imam Ḥussain was martyred, and bake them to make small tablets on which they prostrate during their *Ṣalāh* (prayer).

Prayers to the dead

Those who practice grave worship direct prayers to the dead in two ways:

1. Some use the dead as intercessors. They pray to them in the way that Catholics use their priests in the confession of their sins. Catholics confess their sins to their priests and the priests ask God's forgiveness for them. Thus, the priests act as middle-men between the people and God.

The pre-Islamic Arabs viewed their idols in a similar way. With regard to the purpose of their idols, Allah quoted the pagan Arabs as saying,

﴿ ... مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَآ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰٓ ... ﴿٣﴾ ﴾

(سورة الزُّمَر : ٣)

"... *We only worship them so that they may bring us closer to Allah...*" (Qur'an 39: 3)

Some grave-worshippers among Muslims pray to the dead asking them to convey their requests to Allah for the fulfillment of their needs. This practice is based on their belief that righteous dead people are not only closer to Allah than they are, but also that they are capable of hearing any man's request and fulfilling it, even after their death ! Thus, the dead become idol intermediaries capable of doing favours for the living.

2. Others pray directly to the dead, begging them forgiveness for their sins. In so doing, they give dead humans Allah's attribute of being (*at-Tawwāb*), the One to whom repentance is due, as well as that of being (*al-Ghafoor*), the only One capable of forgiving sins. There is a strong similarity between their practice and that of the Catholics among Christians who call on special saints for the fulfillment of their daily needs. For example, if something is lost, Saint Anthony of Thebes is prayed to in order to help find it.[2] St.

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[2] *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1987, vol. 1, p. 509.

Jude Thaddaeus is the patron saint of the impossible and is prayed to for intercession in incurable illnesses, unlikely marriages, or the like.[3] If someone is setting out on a journey, Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travellers, used to be prayed to for protection up until 1969 when he was officially struck off the list of saints by papal decree, after it was confirmed that he was fictitious.[4] Included in this category are Christians in general with regard to Prophet Jesus whom they consider to be God incarnate. Most Christians pray to Jesus instead of God. There are many ignorant Muslims throughout the world who direct their prayers to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in this fashion.

Both methods of grave worship are totally rejected by the teachings of Islam, which hold that one who dies enters the dimension called the *Barzakh,* where his deeds come to an end. He is unable to do anything for the living, though the results of his deeds may affect the living and continue to earn reward or punishment for himself. Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying,

> "When a man dies, his (good) deeds come to an end, except in three ways: charity of continuing benefit, knowledge beneficial to people, and a righteous child who prays for him."[5]

The Prophet (ﷺ) also took great pains to explain that he could not benefit anyone in this life, regardless of their closeness to him. Allah (ﷻ) commanded him in the Qur'an to say to his followers:

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[3] *The World Book Encyclopedia*, (Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1987), vol. 11, p. 146.

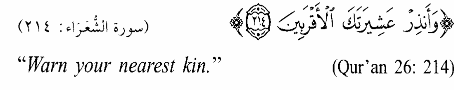
[4] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 417.

[5] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 867, hadith no. 4005.

﴿قُل لَّآ أَمۡلِكُ لِنَفۡسِي نَفۡعٗا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَآءَ ٱللَّهُۚ وَلَوۡ كُنتُ أَعۡلَمُ ٱلۡغَيۡبَ لَٱسۡتَكۡثَرۡتُ مِنَ ٱلۡخَيۡرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ ٱلسُّوٓءُۚ إِنۡ أَنَا۠ إِلَّا نَذِيرٞ وَبَشِيرٞ لِّقَوۡمٖ يُؤۡمِنُونَ ١٨٨﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ١٨٨)

"*I have no power to bring good or avert harm even regarding myself, except as Allah wills. If I had knowledge of the unseen, I would surely have accumulated only good and no evil would have befallen me. But I am only a warner and a bringer of glad tidings for those who believe.*" (Qur'an 7: 188)

One of his Companions, Abu Hurayrah (ﷺ), reported that when the verse,


﴿وَأَنذِرۡ عَشِيرَتَكَ ٱلۡأَقۡرَبِينَ ٢١٤﴾ (سورة الشُّعَرَاء: ٢١٤)

"*Warn your nearest kin.*" (Qur'an 26: 214)

— was revealed to the Prophet, he (ﷺ) said,

> "O' people of Quraysh, secure deliverance from Allah (by doing good deeds). I cannot avail you at all against Allah, O' sons of 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib, I cannot avail you at all against Allah, O' (my uncle) 'Abbās ibn 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib, O' (my aunt) Ṣafeeyah, I cannot avail you at all against Allah, O' Fāṭimah, daughter of Muhammad, ask me whatever you like, but I have nothing which can avail you against Allah!"[6]

On another occasion, one of the Prophet's Companions (ﷺ) concluded his statement to the Prophet (ﷺ) with the phrase,

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[6] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 136, hadith no. 402 and Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 4, Pp. 478-9, hadith nos. 727-8.

"It is what Allah wills, and what you will." The Prophet (ﷺ) immediately corrected him, saying,

> "Are you making me an equal to Allah? Say: 'It is what Allah alone wills.'"[7]

In spite of this clear indication that the Prophet (ﷺ) has no power to change what Allah has destined many Muslims not only pray to him for help, but also pray to a hierarchy of saints. This heretical practice is based on the claim of mystics (*Sufis*) that the cosmic order is preserved by a fixed number of saints called *Rijāl al-Ghayb* (the men of the unseen world). When a holy man among them dies, his place is immediately filled by a substitute. At the peak of the hierarchy is the *Quṭb* (people or mystic axis of the world), or the *Ghawth* (succour). 'Abdul-Qādir Jeelāni (d. 1166 C.E.) is popularly referred to as *al-Ghawth al-A'dham (Ghaus-e-Adham)* "the greatest source of help," and in times of calamity many turn to him for help, crying out, "*Yā 'Abdal-Qādir, Aghithnee!* (O' 'Abdul Qādir, save me!)" Such unmistakable pronouncements of *shirk* are common even though practicing Muslims repeat at least seventeen times per day in their daily prayers the phrase, "*Eeyāka na 'budu wa eeyāka nasta 'een*" "*You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help*".

Both using the dead as intercessors and praying to them directly contain the grave sin of *shirk,* which Islam vigilantly opposes, yet both methods have managed to creep into the religious practices of the masses of Muslims today in one form or another. In so doing they inadvertently confirm the veracity of Allah's Ominous statement in the Qur'an,

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[7] Collected by Aḥmad.

﴿وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُم بِٱللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُم مُّشْرِكُونَ ۝١٠٦﴾

(سورة يُوسُف: ١٠٦)

"Most of them [claim] belief in Allah, while committing shirk." (Qur'an 12: 106)

— as well as the Prophet's warning reported by Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri (ﷺ):

> "You will follow the practices of your predecessors, inch by inch and yard by yard; so much so that if they were to enter a lizard's hole, you would also follow them." When he was asked if he meant the Jews the Christians, he replied "If not them, who else?"[8]

This prophecy not only refers to the present varieties of grave worship among Muslims, but also forebodes the imitation of Christian idolatry, as in the catholic veneration of icons. Thawbān reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "The Last Hour will not come until some groups of my nation worship idols,"[9]

And Abu Hurayrah (ﷺ) reported that he (Messenger of Allah) (ﷺ) said,

> "The Last Hour will not come until women from the Daws tribe wiggle their buttocks (as they circumambulate) around the temple of the idol[10] *al-*

[8] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, Pp. 314-5, hadith no. 422 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1403, hadith no. 6448.

[9] Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, Pp. 1180-1, hadith no. 4239, Ibn Mājah and Tirmidhi.

[10] Ibn Atheer, *an-Nihāyah fī Ghareeb al-Ḥadeeth wa al-Athar*, (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Islāmiyah, 1963), vol. 1, p. 64.

Khalasha."[11]

It is, therefore, essential that Muslims have a clear understanding of religion, its origin and its historical development from an Islamic perspective. After so doing, such practices may then be comprehended in their proper context, and the Islamic ruling on them will become obvious.

The evolutionary model of religion

Under the influence of Darwin's theory of evolution, most social scientists and anthropologists have concluded that religion began with early man's pantheistic deification of the forces of nature.[12] According to them, early man was amazed by the more cataclysmic and devastating forces of nature, like lightning, thunder, volcanoes, earthquakes, etc., which they supposedly conceived of as supernatural beings. Consequently, they sought ways and means of appeasing them, much in the same way that they sought the aid of their leaders or more powerful tribes. In this way, early rites of worship, like prayer and sacrifice, were supposed to have developed. The North American Indians, who believe in spirits of the river, forests etc., are used as examples of this early state in the evolution of religion known as animism.[13]

At the animistic stage, the evolutionists claim, every individual had a personal set of gods. As families developed, family gods replaced personal gods. The polytheistic situation

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[11] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 9, p. 178, hadith no. 232, and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1506, hadith no. 6944.

[12] David Hume (1711-76) followed Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) in propounding this theory in the *Natural History of Religion* (1757) (*Dictionary of Religions*, p. 258).

[13] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, Pp. 16, 193.

among the Hindus of India, where every family has its own personal god, is cited as an example of this stage. Economic necessity and the struggle for survival eventually caused family links to expand, and thus tribes evolved. Tribal gods, in turn, gradually replaced the old family gods, and with each successive generation tribes became larger and larger, with the result that the number of idols got fewer and fewer. Eventually ditheism emerged in which all of the supernatural powers were confined to two main gods, a god of good and a god of evil. According to evolutionists, an example of this stage can be seen in the religion of the Zoroastrians of Persia. Prior to the appearance of the Persian "reformer," Zarathustra (Greek, Zoroaster), Persians were thought to have believed in nature spirits, clan gods and family gods. According to the evidence gathered and interpreted by anthropologists, during Zoroaster's time tribal gods were reduced to two: *Ahura Mazda* who, according to them, created all good in the world, and *Angra Manyu* who created all evil.[14] When tribes gave way to nations, tribal gods in turn gave way to the national God and monotheism was supposedly born. The God of Israel, as portrayed in the Old Testament, is a national entity, fighting on their behalf against their foes. The Israelites in turn are referred to as His chosen children. The Egyptian ruler, Akhenaten of the fourteenth century B.C., also known as Amenhotep IV, is also cited as proof of the evolutionist concept of religion. At a time when the prevailing belief in Egypt was polytheism, he introduced the monotheistic worship of one God called *Ra,* which he symbolized by the disc of the sun.[15]

Thus, according to social scientists and anthropologists, religion has no divine origin. It is merely a by-product of the evolution of

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[14] *Dictionary of Religions*, Pp. 28 & 42.

[15] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 143.

early man's superstitions based on his lack of scientific knowledge. They believe that science will eventually be able to unlock all of the secrets of nature, at which time, it is assumed, religion will disappear.

The degeneration model of religion

The Islamic concept of religion and its development is exactly the opposite of the previous view. It is one of a process of degeneration and regeneration and not one of evolution. Man began as a monotheist, but in time strayed into various forms of polytheism. Sometimes it was ditheism, sometimes it was tritheism and sometimes it was pantheism. Prophets were sent by God to all the nations and tribes of the earth to guide them back to the straight path of monotheism. But with the passage of time, people went astray and the teachings of the prophets were either changed or lost. The proof of this reality lies in the fact that all the so called primitive tribes which have been found have the belief in a Supreme Being. No matter what their stage of religious development may have been according to the evolutionary theory, most believe in a Supreme God over all the other gods or spirits. From *Itzmna,* the creator-god of the Central-American Mayans[16] to *Ngewo,* creator of the universe and spirits of the Sierra Leone Mende,[17] and from Hinduism's *Brahma*, the impersonal Absolute,[18] to *Marduk,* the ancient city deity of Babylon and Supreme God of the pantheon,[19] the Supreme Being can be clearly seen. Even in the ditheism of the Zoroastrians, *Ahura Mazda,* the God of good, is greater than *Angra Manyu*. And the

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[16] *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 93.

[17] Ibid., p. 210.

[18] Ibid., p. 68.

[19] Ibid., p. 204.

day of judgement, according to their beliefs, is the day when *Ahura Mazda* defeats *Angra Manyu*! So *Ahura Mazda* is really their supreme God.[20]

According to the evolutionary model, this should not be the case, as the belief in One Supreme God supposedly grew out of limited polytheism and could not co-exist with animism. However, the concept of a single Supreme Being remains in most religions as evidence that the masses strayed away from the monotheistic teachings of the prophets by giving some of God's attributes to other aspects of creation, which came to be regarded as lesser gods in some cases and as intercessors in others.

Another proof of the correctness of the degeneration model can be found in the historical transition of monotheistic Judaism into polytheistic Christianity. Monotheism taught by Prophet Jesus first degenerated into ditheism according to those who held that Jesus was not God the father, but a created divine son. This was also the case among Greeks who identified Jesus as the *Logos*, found in the philosophies of Anaxagoras through to Aristotle.[21] Later it further degenerated into tritheism among the Romans who officially sanctioned the trinitarian concept.[22] Finally, it degenerated into full-fledged polytheism in the Roman Catholic Church, where Mary and a series of so-called saints were given the powers of intercession and protection.

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[20] *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 28.

[21] According to these philosophers, *Nous* was the immaterial motivating principle of the universe while *Logos* was its material manifestation - (*Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 314).

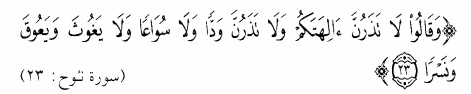
[22] The finally acceptable trinitarian formula, as worked out by the Cappadocians and approved by the Roman council of Constantinople in 381, held that God is one Being, existing externally in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 586).

Similarly, if we look at the pure and final message of Islam as brought by the last Prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), and compare it with the present day beliefs among many Muslims, we find that a degeneration of beliefs and practices has also occurred. The pure monotheism of early Islam has degenerated over the ages. Among the various sects which have arisen, Allah's attributes have been given to the Prophet (ﷺ), his descendants, as well as to pious and impious individuals designated as saints among later generations.

The Darwinian concept of organic evolution proposes that all life forms in existence today evolved from single-celled amoeba-like organisms. These simple life forms later developed into increasingly complex forms due to their struggle for survival. If this notion of a progression from the simple to the complex were to be directly applied to the development of religions, it would in fact support the degeneration model, which proposes that religion began in its simplest form, monotheism, but in time changed into increasingly complex forms of idolatry as its simplicity was lost. Ditheism, tritheism, polytheism and pantheism emerged in varying localities, depending on the prevailing socio-economic conditions.

The Beginning of *shirk*

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) described in vivid detail exactly how polytheism first found its way among mankind after eons of monotheism, which began with Prophet Adam (عليه السلام). The Prophet's Companions related the picture to us in their explanation (*tafsīr*) of verse 23 of *Sūrah Nooḥ*, where Allah, (تعالى) describe the reaction of Prophet Nooḥs' (Noah) (عليه السلام) people when he invited them to the worship of only one God:



"They said to each other: 'Do not leave your gods! Do not give up Wadd and Suwā', nor Yaghooth, Ya'ooq and Nasr!'" (Qur'an 71: 23)

Ibn 'Abbās said the following in his commentary on this Qur'anic verse:

> "These were idols of Prophet Noah's nation which in time ended up among the Arabs. *Wadd* became the tribal god of the Kalb tribe in the region of Dawmatul-Jandal, *Suwā'* was adopted by the Hudhayl tribe, *Yaghooth* by the tribe of Ghutayf at Jurf near Saba, *Ya'ooq,* by the Hamdān tribe and *Nasr* became the god of the Dhul-Kalā[23] clan of the Himyar tribe. These idols were named after some righteous men among Noah's people. When these righteous men died, Satan inspired the people to make statues of them bearing their names. These statues were placed in their favourite meeting places as reminders of righteousness and no one of that generation worshipped them. However, when that generation died off, and the purpose of the statues were forgotten, Satan came to their descendants and told them that their predecessors used to worship the statues, because it was due to them that it rained. The descendants were fooled and began to worship them as idols.[24] The following generations continued worship them."[25]

[23] A Himyarite king of Yemen (Muhammad ibn Mandhūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Beirut: Dār Sādir, n.d., vol. 8, p. 313).

[24] From the narration of Muhammad ibn Qays collected by aṭ-Ṭabari.

[25] Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 6, Pp. 414-5, hadith no. 442.

The *tafsīr* of the verse given by these two illustrious Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), paints a clear picture of the process by which idolatry and polytheism found its way into the pure monotheistic system of beliefs held by our ancestors. It confirms the degeneration model, identifies the historical origin of ancestor worship, and also explains why Islam is so firmly opposed to the depiction of human and animal forms in statues or paintings. The prohibition of images can also be found among the ten commandments given to Prophet Moses and recorded in the Old Testament:

> "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth."[26]

Early Christianity maintained this attitude until an infusion of Greco-Roman thought thoroughly distorted Prophet Jesus' teachings. This change produced a rash of statue making in which martyrs, saints, apostles, Mary, Jesus and even God Himself were depicted.[27]

On the other hand, the last Prophet (ﷺ) warned those who made pictures and statues, as well as those who kept them hanging on display, that Allah would give them a grave punishment in the next life. The Prophet's wife, 'Ā'ishah bint Abu Bakr, said,

> "Once the Prophet came to see me and I had my closet covered with a woolen curtain which had pictures of

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[26] Exodus, 20:4.

[27] The second council of Nicea (787 CE) officially approved the veneration of icons (symbolic sacred images) as a sign of faith in the incarnation. According to them, the divine *Logos* (word) became fully human as Jesus Christ and as such could be portrayed (*Dictionary of Religions*, p. 159).

winged horses on it. When he saw the curtain, the colour of his face changed and he said, 'O' 'Ā'ishah, those receiving the most severe punishment on the Day of Resurrection are those who compete with Allah's act of creation. They will be punished and asked to bring to life what they have created.' The Prophet went on to say, 'Certainly, angels do not enter houses in which pictures and statues are present.' "

'Ā'ishah then said,

"So we cut it (the curtain) up into pieces and made out of it one or two pillows."[28]

Excessive praise of the righteous

The previously mentioned story about the appearance of *shirk* during the time of Prophet Noah's people also indicates that excessive love and praise of the righteous provided a foundation on which idolatry could be established.[29] The worship of images of Buddha and Jesus, in Buddhism and Christianity, represent clear examples of contemporary idolatry based on excessive love and praise, of the righteous. Due to the dangers inherent in excessive praise, the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered his Companions and Muslims in general not to praise him beyond his real worth. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

"Do not praise me excessively as the Christians did with the son of Mary. Verily I am merely a slave, so (refer to me) instead as *'Abdullāh wa Rasooluh* (the slave of

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[28] Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, p. 542 hadith no. 838 and Pp. 545-6, hadith no. 844 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1158, hadith no. 5254.

[29] *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 311.

Allah and His messenger)."[30]

Since it was the practice of Christians and Jews of that time to build places of worship over what was believed to be the graves of the prophets and saints, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) cursed this practice. He also cursed anyone in the future who did likewise, in order to make it perfectly clear that Islam was totally opposed to such idolatrous practices and to warn people about the great danger of excessively praising the righteous.

On one occasion the Prophet's wife, Umm Salamah (رضي الله عنها),[31] told him about a church with pictures (on its walls) which she had seen in Ethiopia. He (ﷺ) said,

> "If a righteous man dies among those people, they build over his grave a place of worship and paint in it those types of pictures. They are the most evil of creation in Allah's sight."[32]

It is worth nothing that Umm Salamah's mention of the church to the Prophet (ﷺ) was while he was on his death bed, and his description of its builders as being, "the most evil of creation",

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[30] Collected by both Bukhari and Muslim. See Bukhari, (Arabic-English), vol. 4, p. 435, hadith no. 654.

[31] Umm Salamah's name was Hind bint Abi Umayyah and she was from the tribe of Quraysh. She and her husband, Abu Salamah, sought refuge in Ethiopia from the persecution of the Quraysh pagans and later they migrated to Madīnah after the Prophet (ﷺ) did so. When her husband died in the 4th year after the migration, the Prophet married her. Umm Salamah was among the most scholarly women of her time and she continued to teach Islamic law after the Prophet's time until her death in 684 CE (62 AH) (Ibn al-Jawzi, *Sifah as-Safwah*, Cairo: Dār al-Wa'ee, 1st ed., 1970, vol. 2, Pp. 40-2).

[32] Narrated by 'Ā'ishah and collected by both Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 1, p. 251, hadith no. 419 and vol. 2, p. 238, hadith no. 426 and Muslim), (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 268, hadith no. 1076.

indicates that their practices are strictly forbidden to Muslims, without any exception. The reason for them being so severely cursed by the Prophet (ﷺ) is due to the fact that this practice of their combined two major sources of idolatry:

1. Erecting edifices over graves and
2. Making images.[33]

Both of these acts invariably lead to *shirk* as is obvious from the story of the idols from the time of Prophet Noah.

Restrictions on visiting graves

The fact that grave-worship was among the last things which the Prophet (ﷺ) warned against before leaving the world indicates that this practice would become a serious test for his ummah. In the formative years of Islam, the Prophet (ﷺ) had forbidden his followers from even visiting graves, and it was not until *Tawḥīd* (belief in God's unity) was firmly established among them that the ban was lifted. The Prophet (ﷺ) was reported to have said,

> "I used to forbid you from visiting graves, but now you should visit them, for surely they are reminders of the next life."[34]

However, in spite of this allowance, the Prophet (ﷺ) placed certain restrictions on the visiting of graves in order to avoid its deterioration into grave worship in later generations:

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[33] Ibn Taymiyah quoted in *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 321.

[34] Narrated by Buraidah ibn al-Husayb and collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, Pp. 463-4, hadith no. 2131, Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 919, hadith no. 3229, an-Nasā'i, Aḥmad and al-Bayhaqi.

1. As a means of setting up a barrier against grave worship, formal prayer was totally forbidden in graveyards regardless of the intention. Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri reported from the Prophet (ﷺ) that he said:

> "All the earth is a *masjid* (place of worship) except graveyards and toilets."[35]

Ibn 'Umar also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Pray in your houses; do not make them graveyards."[36]

Voluntary prayer is recommended in the home as an example for the family. If no prayer takes place there, it then resembles a graveyard in which no prayer is allowed. Although praying to Allah in a graveyard is not in itself *shirk,* the ignorant, under Satan's influence, may assume that prayers in graveyards are *to* the dead and not *for* them. Consequently, this avenue to idolatry was decisively blocked. On one occasion the second Caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه), noticed another of the Prophet's Companions, Anas ibn Mālik (رضي الله عنه), praying near a grave and called out to him, "The grave! The grave!"[37]

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[35] Collected by Tirmidhi, Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 125, hadith no. 492, and Ibn Mājah.

[36] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 2, p. 156, hadith no. 280, and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 376, hadith no. 1704.

[37] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 1, p. 251, hadith no. 48. These Hadiths also confirm that the Prophet's prohibition of prayer in graveyards was not due to the area being considered ritually impure (*Najis*). The graves of the prophets are pure, because, according to the Prophet (ﷺ), Allah has not allowed the earth to eat their bodies. Hence, the Prophet's curse on the Jews and Christians for taking the graves of their prophets as places of worship was due to the *shirk* involved and not the impurity of the area. (*Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 328).

2. A second barrier was placed by the Prophet's prohibition of purposely praying in the direction of graves because such an act may be later understood by the ignorant as prayer directed to the dead themselves. Abu Marthad al-Ghanawi reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Do not pray towards graves nor sit on them."[38]

3. The recitation of Qur'an in graveyards is not allowed, as neither the Prophet (ﷺ) nor his Companions were known to do so. When the Prophet's wife, 'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها), asked him what to say when visiting graveyards, he told her to give *salāms* (greetings of peace) and a supplication for those buried but did not tell her to recite *al-Fātiḥah* or any other chapter from the Qur'an.[39] Abu Hurayrah

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[38] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 460, hadith no. 2122; Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 917, hadith no. 3223; Nasā'i and Ibn Mājah. This includes even *Du'ā'* (informal prayer) in their direction, because the Prophet had said that *Du'ā'* is worship. Collected by Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 387, hadith no. 1474, Tirmidhi and Ibn Mājah. *Du'ā'* should be made in the same direction as *Ṣalāh* (Formal prayer), towards the *Qiblah* (facing Makkah).

Note: It should also be noted that in Islam the funeral service is **not** held in the graveyard, but in a prayer area set aside for large congregational prayers or in a *masjid*. Furthermore, because the body is placed at the front of the congregation, directly in front of the Imam (prayer leader), the funeral prayer (*Ṣalātul-Janāzah*) does not have any bowing (*Rukū'*) or prostration (*Sujūd*), so as not to give anyone the impression that the prayer is **to** the dead and not merely **for** the dead as the wordings of the prayer clearly indicate.

[39] Nāsir ad-Dīn al-Albāni, *Aḥkām al-Janā'iz*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmi, 1st ed., 1969), p. 191. The text of the *Du'ā'* is as follows:

السلام على اهل الديار من المؤمنين والمسلمين ويرحم الله
المستقدمين منا والمستأخرين وإنا ان شاء الله بكم لا حقون

As-Salāmu 'alā Ahlid-Diyāri minal-Mu'mineen wal-Muslimeen Yarhamullāhu al-Mustaqdimeena minnā wal-Musta'khireen wa Innā in Shā' Allāhu bikum=

(ﷺ) also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) had said,

> "Do not make your houses graveyards, for verily Satan flees from the house in which *Sūrah al-Baqarah* is read."[40]

This narration and others like it imply that the Qur'an is not to be read in graveyards. Qur'anic recitation is encouraged in one's house, and making it like a graveyard, in which no recitation should take place, is forbidden.[41]

4. The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade the white-washing of graves, the building of structures over them,[42] writing on them,[43] or raising them above ground level.[44] He also taught that any such structures should be torn down and the graves made level with the ground. 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (ﷺ) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered him to demolish all idols he came across, and to level all graves more than a palm's width high, with the surrounding earth.[45]

=*Lāhiqoon*. (Peace be upon the believers and Muslims among the inhabitants of these dwellings. May Allah have mercy on those who have gone ahead of us, and those following us. And we shall - Allah willing - be joining you." Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, Pp. 461-2, hadith no. 2127.

[40] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 377, hadith no. 1707, Tirmidhi and Aḥmad.

[41] As for the recitation of *Sūrah Yasīn*, there is no narration concerning graveyards and the narration about its recitation over the dying is inauthentic (*Ḍa'īf*). See *Aḥkām al-Janā'iz* p. 11 and p. 192 ftn. 2.

[42] Reported by Jābir and collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 459, hadith no. 2116 and Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, Pp. 216-7, hadith nos. 3219-20.

[43] Reported by Jābir and collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 216, hadith no. 3219 and an-Nasā'i.

[44] Reported by Jābir and collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, Pp. 459-60, hadith no. 2116 and Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 216 hadith no. 3219 and an-Nasā'i.

[45] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 459, hadith no. 2115, Abu=

5. The building of *masjids* over graves was expressly forbidden by the Prophet (ﷺ). The Prophet's wife 'Ā'ishah (ﷺ), reported that when death was descending upon Allah's Messenger, he drew his striped cloak over his face saying,

> "May Allah's curse be on the Jews and Christians for taking the graves of their prophets as places of worship."[46]

6. In order to prevent grave worship, the Prophet (ﷺ) also forbade annual or seasonal gatherings even around his (Prophet's) own grave. Abu Hurayrah (ﷺ) reported that he (ﷺ) said,

> "Do not make my grave an *'Eid* (place of celebration), nor make your houses graveyards, and ask (Allah's)

=Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, Pp. 914-15, hadith no. 3212, an-Nasā'i and Tirmidhi. The text of the hadith is reported by Abu al-Hayyāj al-Asadi wherein he said that 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib said to him, "Shall I send you as the messenger of Allah sent me? To deface every statue or picture in houses and level all elevated graves."

Note: These hadiths have been forgotten in many Muslim lands where graveyards have become filled with a variety of structures built over graves in imitation of other nations. In some lands like Egypt, graveyards resemble towns with well defined streets. Tombs to house the dead resemble houses, so much so that in some places poor families have broken into them and set up permanent residence in them. Based on this hadith and others like it, not only should such tombs be demolished, but also mausoleums like the Taj Mahal in India, the one erected over the grave of the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah, in Karachi, Pakistan, the tomb of the claimed *Mahdi* in Sudan that of Sayyid al-Badawi in Egypt, etc. Such a step would also cancel the role of the *Sadanah* (custodians) of the shrines who live off the generous donations of visitors who believe that generosity to the custodians can facilitate prayers to saints and guarantee results.

[46] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 1, p. 255, hadith no. 427, Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 269 hadith no. 1082, Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 917, hadith no. 3221, and ad-Dārimi.

> blessings for me wherever you may be, for they will reach me."[47]

7. Setting out on journeys to visit graves was also forbidden by the Prophet (ﷺ). This practice forms the basis of idolatrous pilgrimages in other religions. Abu Hurayrah and Abu Sa'īd al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with them) both reported that Allah's Messenger said,

> "Do not travel except to three *masjids*, *Masjid Ḥarām* (the Ka'bah in Makkah), the *masjid* of the Messenger, and *al-Aqsā Masjid*."[48]

While returning from a trip Abu Bashrah al-Ghifāri met Abu Hurayrah and the latter asked him where he was coming from. Abu Bashrah replied that he was coming back from aṭ-Ṭoor where he had made prayer. Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said, "If only I had caught you before you left, for I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say,

> 'Do not travel to other than three *masjids*...'."[49]

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[47] Collected by Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 542-3, hadith no. 2037 and Aḥmad. If annual gatherings around the Prophet's grave are forbidden, then the huge gatherings and celebrations held on different occasions, like birthdays, at the shrines built over the graves of so-called saints, are completely outside the teachings of Islam. Not only should the shrines be demolished, as indicated by the Prophet's command narrated by the fourth Righteous Caliph, 'Ali, but these religious festivals should also be stopped.

[48] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 2, p. 157, hadith no. 281, Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 699, hadith no. 3218, Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 540, hadith no. 2028, Tirmidhi, an-Nasā'i and Ibn Mājah.

[49] Collected by Aḥmad and at-Tayālasi and rated *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) by al-Albāni. See *Aḥkām al-Jānā'iz*, p. 226.

Taking graves as places of worship

Ibn Mas'ūd reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "The most evil of mankind are those who will be alive when the Last Day arrives and those who take graves as places of worship."[50]

Jundub ibn 'Abdullah reported that five days before the Prophet's death he heard him say,

> "Those before you took the graves of their prophets as places of worship. Do not take graves as places of worship for verily I forbid you to do so."[51]

After understanding clearly from the previous hadiths that taking graves as places of worship is forbidden by the Prophet (ﷺ), it is necessary to define exactly what is meant by the phrase "Taking graves as places of worship." There are three possible meanings which can be deduced from the phrase in Arabic:

1. Making prayer or *sujūd* (prostration) on or towards a grave:

Praying on the grave is forbidden explicitly in Ibn 'Abbās' hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

> "Do not pray towards graves nor sit on them."[52]

— as well as the hadith narrated by Abu Marthad mentioned earlier.

2. Building a *masjid* over a grave or putting a grave in a *masjid*:

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[50] Collected by Aḥmad.

[51] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 269, hadith no. 1083.

[52] Collected by aṭ-Ṭabarāni.

Building *masjids* over graves is forbidden by Umm Salamah's hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) explained that those who build places of worship over graves are the most evil of creation in Allah's sight. Placing a grave in a *masjid* was also forbidden according to 'Ā'ishah's interpretation of the Prophet's final statement,

> "May Allah curse a people who take their Prophets' graves as *masjids*."[53]

When the suggestion was made to bury the Prophet (ﷺ) in his *masjid*, she opposed it based on the Prophet's last words.

3. Praying in a *masjid* containing a grave:

Praying in a *masjid* (mosque) built over a grave is forbidden, because it is a natural consequence of the prohibition placed on building *masjids* over graves. The prohibition of a path necessarily prohibits what is at the end of the path. For example, the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade wind and stringed musical instruments (*Ma'āzif*). Abu Mālik al-Ash'ari reported that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say,

> "There will be among my followers those who make allowable (*ḥalāl*) fornication and adultery, the wearing of silk (for men), taking intoxicants, and musical instruments (*Ma'āzif*)."[54]

Both the playing of these instruments and listening to music are automatically prohibited as they are the purposes for which

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[53] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 1, p. 255, hadith no. 427 and vol. 2, p. 232, hadith no. 414, Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 1, p. 269, hadith no. 1082, Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 917, hadith no. 3221, and Aḥmad.

[54] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 7, p. 345, hadith no. 484 [B].

musical instruments are made. Similarly, neither the prohibition on building *masjids* over graves nor the order to build them elsewhere is aimed at the act of construction, for building is in itself permissible. It is, in fact, aimed at the performance of *Ṣalāh* in them, which is the purpose for which they are built. Thus, the prohibition of building *masjids* on graves automatically implies the prohibition on *Ṣalāh* in such *masjids*.

***Masjids* with graves**

Such *masjids* are of two types with regard to their origin:

a. *Masjid* built over a grave, and

b. *Masjid* in which a grave has been put, some time after its construction.

Naturally, there is no difference between the two as far as *Ṣalāh* is concerned. In both cases, *Ṣalāh* in them is despised if no regard is paid to the grave, and *ḥarām* if *Ṣalāh* to the grave is intended. However, the method of correcting such *masjids* varies according to their origin:

1. A *masjid* built over a grave should be demolished and the grave levelled if it has a structure over it. Because such a *masjid* was originally a grave, it should be returned to its original state.

2. A *masjid* in which a grave has been placed should be left intact, but the grave should be removed. In this case the *masjid* was originally a *masjid* and not a grave; thus, it should be returned to its original states.

The Prophet's grave

The presence of the Prophet's grave in his *masjid* in Madīnah can neither be used to justify the placing of bodies in other *masjids* nor the building of *masjids* over graves. The Prophet (ﷺ) did not order that he be buried in his *masjid*, nor did his Companions put his grave into the *masjid*. The Companions of the Prophet wisely avoided burying the Prophet (ﷺ) in the local graveyard for fear that later generations would become overly attached to his grave. 'Umar, the freed slave of Ghafrah, related that when the *Ṣaḥābah* gathered to decide on the Prophet's burial, one said: "Let us bury him in the place where he used to pray." Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) replied, "May Allah protect us from making him an idol to be worshipped." Others said, "Let us bury him in al-Baqi' (a graveyard in Madīnah) where his brothers among the *Muhājirīn* (migrants from Makkah) are buried." Abu Bakr replied: "Verily burying the Prophet in al-Baqi' is detestable because some people may try to seek refuge in him which is a right belonging only to Allah. So, if we take him out (to the graveyard), we will ruin Allah's right, even if we carefully guard the Messenger's grave." They then asked, "What is your opinion, O' Abu Bakr?" He replied, "I heard Allah's Messenger say:

> 'Allah has not taken the life of any of his prophets except that were buried where they died."

Some of them said, "By Allah, what you have said is pleasing and convincing." Then they made a line around the Prophet's bed (in 'Ā'ishah's house) and dug the grave where his bed was. 'Ali, al-'Abbās, al-Faḍl, and the Prophet's family took his body and prepared it for burial.[55]

[55] Collected by Ibn Zanjooyah and quoted by al-Albāni in *Taḥdheer as-Sājid*,=

'Ā'ishah's house was separated from the *masjid* by a wall and it had a door through which the Prophet (ﷺ) used to enter the *masjid* to lead *Ṣalāh.* The Companions sealed off this doorway in order to complete the separation of the Prophet's grave from his *masjid*. Consequently, the only way that his grave could be visited at that time was from outside the *masjid*.

Expansions of the *masjid* (mosque) took place in the time of the second Caliph 'Umar and the third Caliph 'Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with them). But both of them cautiously avoided the inclusion of either 'Ā'ishah's house or that of any of the other wives of the Prophet (ﷺ). Expansion in the direction of the houses of the wives of the Prophet would have automatically included the Prophet's grave in the *masjid*. However, after the death of all the *Ṣaḥābah* who were in Medīnah,[56] Caliph al-Walid ibn 'Abdul-Mālik (reign 705-715 C.E.) was the first to extend the *masjid* in an easterly direction. He included 'Ā'ishah's house inside the *masjid*, but demolished the houses of the other wives of the Prophet. The expansion was reported to have been carried out by al-Walid's governor 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz.

When 'Ā'ishah's house was included inside the *masjid*, a high circular wall was built around it so that it would not be visible at all from inside the *masjid*. Two additional walls were later built at an angle from the two northern corners of the house in such a way that they met each other forming a triangle. This was done to prevent anyone from facing the grave directly.[57]

=(Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmi, 2nd. ed., 1972), Pp. 13-4.

[56] The last *Ṣaḥābi* to die in Madīnah was Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh. He died there in 699 CE during the reign of Caliph 'Abdul-Mālik (reign 685-705 CE).

[57] Narrated by al-Qurṭubi and quoted in *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, p. 324.

Many years later, the familiar dome was added to the roof of the *masjid* and was placed directly above the Prophet's grave.[58] The grave was later surrounded by a brass cage with doors and windows, and the walls of the grave itself were draped in green cloth. In spite of the barriers which have been placed around the Prophet's grave, the error still remains to be corrected. Walls should once again be placed to separate it from the *masjid* so that no one could pray in its direction nor visit it inside the *masjid*.

Ṣalāh in the Prophet's *masjid*

The prohibition of *Ṣalāh* in *masjids* with graves in them is applicable to all *masjids* except that of the Prophet (ﷺ). This is due to the many special virtues attributed to prayer in it, not found in any other *masjid* containing a grave.[59] The Prophet (ﷺ) himself pointed out this special feature saying,

> "Do not journey except to three *masjids*: *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, *al-Masjid al-Aqsā*, and this *Masjid* of mine."[60]

He (ﷺ) also said:

> "A single *Ṣalāh* in this *masjid* of mine, is better than

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[58] Sultan Kalawoon as-Salāhi built the first dome over the chamber in 1282 CE and it was first painted green by order of Sultan Abdul-Ḥameed in 1837 (see 'Ali Ḥafiz, Chapters from the *History of Madīnah*, Jeddah: al-Madīnah Printing and Publication Co., 1st ed., 1987, Pp. 78-9).

[59] There is no truth to the story that Prophet Ismā'eel and his mother or any of the other prophets are buried in the open portion of the Ka'bah Commonly called "Hujr Ismā'eel."

[60] Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 2, p. 157, hadith no. 281, Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 699, hadith no. 3218 and Abu Dawūd, *Sunan Abi Dawūd*, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 699, hadith no. 3218.

1,000 *Ṣalāhs* elsewhere, except *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*."[61]

He even assigned special significance to a part of his *masjid* saying:

"The area between my house and my pulpit is a garden from the gardens of Paradise."[62]

If *Ṣalāh* in the Prophet's *masjid* was considered *makrūh* (disliked), the virtues of his *masjid* would be negated and it would be made equal with all other *masjids*. Just as *Ṣalāh* in general has been forbidden at certain times, yet allowed if it has a defined purpose (e.g., *janāzah*) other than optional prayer, *Ṣalāh* in the Prophet's *masjid* is likewise desirable due to its exceptional nature.[63] And, Allah forbid, if a grave were to be put in either *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* or *al-Masjid al-Aqsā*, *Ṣalāh* would still be desirable in them due to their special virtues and place of honour in the sight of God.

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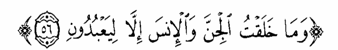
[61] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 2, p. 157, hadith no. 282 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 697, hadith no. 3209.

[62] Collected by Bukhari, (Arabic-Eng.), vol. 3, Pp. 61-2, hadith no. 112 and Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 2, p. 696, hadith no. 3204.

[63] *Taḥdheer as-Sājid*, Pp. 196-200.

Conclusion

True faith of a standard acceptable to Allah has to be based on *Tawḥīd* free from *shirk,* as stated in the Qur'an and hadith and outlined in detail in the preceding chapters. Anything less than that represents an aspect of idolatry and or disbelief, regardless of how firmly those who join partners with God profess their faith in Him or how skillfully they rationalize their unsanctioned practices. Allah's unity must be maintained spiritually, intellectually, and practically in all facets of human life within which the pleasure of God is sought. Monotheism, as brought by the Prophets of God, was not merely a theory to be philosophically appreciated or emotionally championed, but a pragmatic blueprint for human existence in submission to the will of Almighty God, Allah. The significance of this fact lies in the purpose of man's creation. Allah (ﷻ) said:



(سورة الذاريات: ٥٦)

"*I only created the jinn and man for my worship.*"

(Qur'an 51: 56)

However, the creation of man is itself a manifestation of Allah's perfect attributes. He is the Creator (*al-Khāliq*), and thus man was brought into existence from non-existence. He is the Most Merciful (*ar-Raḥmān*), and thus the pleasures of this world were granted to him. He is the Most Wise (*al-Ḥakeem*), and thus He prohibited the substances and acts which are harmful to man

while allowing those which are not. He is the Most Forgiving (*al-Ghafoor*), and thus He pardons those who turn to Him in sincere repentance. Abu Ayyūb and Abu Hurayrah both reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> "If you did not commit sins, Allah would have swept you out of existence and replaced you by another people who would commit sins, ask Allah's forgiveness, and He would pardon them."[64]

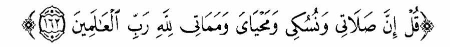
Similarly all of the other divine attributes are manifest in man's creation by God's will.

On the other hand, man's worship of God is for his own benefit, as Allah is in no need of man's worship. In the worship of God man realizes both his material and spiritual potential for all aspects of goodness and thereby earns for himself the everlasting abode of bliss at the end of this brief earthly journey. Consequently, the Godly way of life, Islam, provides a means of turning each and every human act, no matter how insignificant or mundane it may seem, into an act of worship. As long as the following two basic conditions are fulfilled,

1. That the act must be consciously done for the pleasure of God alone and,

2. It be done according to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah,

— man's whole life can enter completely into the service of Allah, as He (ﷻ) prescribed.



(سورة الأنعام: ١٦٢)

[64] Collected by Muslim, (Eng. Trans.), vol. 4, Pp. 1436-7, hadith no. 6620-22.

"*Say: 'Truly, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are all for Allah, Lord of all the worlds.*'"

(Qur'an 6: 162)

However, such a state can only be attained through the knowledge of *Tawḥīd* and its careful, conscious implementation according to the methodology taught by the final Prophet of God, Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah (ﷺ).

Thus, it is the duty of every sincere believer in God to put aside his or her cultural experiences and emotional ties to family, tribe or nation, and acquire a working knowledge of *Tawḥīd,* the foundation of faith. For it is only in the application of that knowledge that man may achieve salvation.

Symbols used in this book

(سبحانه وتعالى) : *Subḥānahu wa Ta'āla* — "The Exalted."

(ﷺ) : *Ṣalla-Allāhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam* —
"Blessings and Peace be upon him."

(عليه السلام) : *'Alayhis-Salām* — "May Peace be upon him."

(رضي الله عنه) : *Raḍi-Allāhu 'Anhu* — "May Allah be pleased with him."

(رضي الله عنها) : *Raḍi-Allāhu 'Anha* — "May Allah be pleased with her."

Glossary

Āyatul Kursi	آية الكرسي	: Verse 255 of the *Sūrah al-Baqarah.* It is very comprehensive verse about *Tawḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah with some of His most basic attributes.
'Abd	عبد	: Slave, servant.
Allahu Akbar	اللّٰهُ أكبر	: Allah is All-Great.
Al-Qādir	القادر	: All-Powerful, an attribute of Allah.
'Arafah	عرفة	: 9th day of Dhul Ḥijjah; name of a place near Makkah where pilgrims have to pass the day on the 9th of Dhul Ḥijjah.
Ar-Raḥmān	الرحمان	: The Most-Merciful, an attribute of Allah.
Ar-Ra'ūf	الرؤف	: The Compassionate, an attribute of Allah.
Ar-Riyā'	الرياء	: Showing off, doing things to please people, instead of pure intention of pleasing Allah.
Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt	أسماء والصفات	: Names and attributes of Allah, His essence and His attributes.
'Aṣr	عصر	: Afternoon, name of the afternoon prayer, name of a chapter of the Qur'an.
Barzakh	برزخ	: Lit. Interval, barrier; It refers to the interval between death and resurrection.

Bid'ah	بدعه	: Innovation, introducing new things in Shari'ah, sans the teaching of the Qur'an and Sunnah; heresy.
Ḍa'īf	ضعيف	: Lit. Weak; In hadith terminology it refers to a report concerning the Prophet with some lacuna in the chain of narrators.
Dhikr	ذكر	: Pl. *Adhkār*; Lit. to remember, citation; In Islamic terminology it refers to remembering and reciting the names and attributes of Allah, the Qur'an, etc.
Dirham	درهم	: Name of the monetary unit (currency) in early Islamic era. It continues as such in Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and UAE with various denominations.
Du'ā'	دعاء	: Supplication, Prayer.
Eemān	إيمان	: Faith, belief.
Fajr	فجر	: Dawn, name of a chapter (*sūrah*) in the Qur'an, pre-dawn prayer before sunrise.
Fāl	فال	: Good omen, practice of some people to take good omen with some thing.
Farḍ	فرض	: Obligatory.
Fiṭrah	فطرة	: Human nature, natural instinct.
Ḥālāt	حالات	: States, conditions. In Sufism a *soofi* passes through various states and conditions while in meditation.

Hadith	حديث :	Pl. *Aḥādīth* (hadiths); Sayings, deeds and tradition of the last Prophet.
Ḥajj	حج :	The fifth pillar of Islam. It is obligatory for every male/female Muslim in the lifetime if one can afford it. This ritual is performed in specified manner at the specified time, i.e., 12th month of Ḥijra Era.
Ḥalāl	حلال :	Lawful things in Islamic Shari'ah.
Ḥarām	حرام :	Forbidden things in Islamic Shari'ah.
'Ibādah	عبادة :	Allah's worship, acts of ritual worship and acts with an intention to please Allah.
Iblees	ابليس :	Satan.
Isrā	إسراء :	Miraculous night journey of the last Prophet from Makkah to Jerusalem and to the heavens.
Jinn	جن :	Non-human, non-visible creature made of fire, responsible for its deeds. Satan belongs to this species.
Karāmāt	كرامات :	Any super natural performance by a pious Muslim to prove divine support.
Khalīfah	خليفه :	Lit. Deputy, vicegerent, viceroy; Caliph, a title of the early Muslim rulers, successor of the last Prophet.
Khayṭ	خيط :	Cord bracelet.
Kuffār	كفّار :	Sing. *Kāfir*; Disbelievers, denying and disbelieving the tenets of Islam.
Kufr	كفر :	Denying, disbelieving.

Maqāmāt مقامات : Stations; in *sufi* terminology it is stages a slave of Allah reaches at through various meditations.

Masjid مسجد : Mosque, specific places where a Muslim offers congregational / individual prayers.

Mi'rāj معراج : Ascension, the Prophet's journey to heavens and the sublime throne — *'Arsh* — before Hijrah, ref. (Qur'an 17: 1) and Sunnah books. The five-time prayers were made obligatory during *Mi'rāj*.

Muawwadhatān مؤذتان : The last two chapters — *sūrahs* — of the Qur'an (*Sūrah al-Falaq* and *Sūrah an-Nās*). It is so named because they are recited to seek refuge in Allah.

Mu'jizāt معجزات : Miracles; Some supernatural performance of a Prophet as a sign of his Prophethood, vid. Prophet Moses' handstick turned into a snake.

Mushrikoon مشركون : Sing. *Mushrik*; People ascribing divinity to persons / things besides Allah.

Mu'tazilah معتزلة : A group of people under heavy impact of Greek philosophy stressing Greek rational/logical arguments in preference to the Qur'an and Sunnah to prove dogmas.

Nafs نفس : Soul.

Qadar	قدر	: Destiny.
Qareen	قرين	: The Jinn assigned to every human being.
Qiyās	قياس	: Analogy, one of the basis to deduce Islamic law in a new given circumstances.
Rabb	رب	: It cannotes 1) Lord and Master, 2) Sustainer, Provider, Supporter, Nourisher and Guardian and 3) Sovereign and Ruler. He Who controls and directs.
Raḥīm	رحيم	: The Most Merciful, an attribute of Allah.
Raḥmān	رحمان	: The All-Compassionate, an attribute of Allah
Rijāl al-Ghayb	رجال الغيب	: A mystical / *Sufi* terminology people believed to be divinely deputed to look after and control world affairs.
Rooḥ	روح	: Soul, spirit.
Rubūbīyah	ربوبيه	: Allah's Dominion.
Ṣaḥābah	صحابه	: Sing. *Ṣaḥābi*; direct disciples, and Companions of the last Prophet.
Ṣalāh	صلاة / صلوٰة	: The second pillar of Islam, obligatory / non-obligatory ritual prayers, also supplications.
Salām	سلام	: Greetings of peace.
Ṣawm	صوم	: The third pillar of Islam. It is obligatory on every male/female adult Muslim with good health to fast in the

		month of Ramḍān, the 9th month of Ḥijri Era.
Shahādah	شهادة :	Pronouncing that there is but only and One Diety — Allah — and Muhammad is His last Messenger.
Shari'ah	شريعه :	Islamic code of law.
Shayṭān	شيطان :	Satan, devil.
Shirk	شرك :	Associating divinity to persons / things along with and beside Allah.
Ṣifāt	صفات :	Attributes.
Siḥr	سحر :	Magic.
Sufi	صوفى :	Mystics, group of people stressing purification of soul through a number of ritual manners.
Sujūd	سجود :	Prostration (in prayer) to Allah, worship.
Tābi'oon	تابعون :	The Followers, the immediate disciples of the Companions of the last Prophet.
Ṭāghoot	طاغوت :	Lit. One who transgresses his prescribed limits; the one who exceeds the limits of his creatureness. The one who challenges the Divine ordainments and imposes his own favourite ways of ordering life.
Tafsīr	تفسير :	Exegesis, the art of explaining the meanings of the Qur'an.
Tameemah	تميمه :	Charm.
Taqwā	تقوىٰ :	Piety.

Ṭareeqah طريقه : Lit. the way; It also refers to school of Islamic Sufism.

Ṭawāf طواف : Circumambulation. Going round the Ka'bah counter-clockwise seven times. It is obligatory ritual part of Ḥajj and 'Umrah.

Tawakkul توكل : Trust in Allah in all matters.

Tawḥīd توحيد : The belief in the Oneness of Divinity of Allah.

Ṭiyarah طياره : Taking omen through bird/s movements or things.

Ulūhīyah اُلوهيه : Allah's Divinity.

Wali ولى : Pl. *Awliyā*; Saint, very pious Muslim.

Wuṣool وصول : Arrival, in Sufism it denotes to a stage when a saint merges with the infinite soul — Allah.

Zakah زكاة / زكوٰة : An annual obligatory prescribed charity (or poor due) by a Muslim in possession of riches, merchandise, agricultural produce, livestock, trading goods etc., over a prescribed limit — a certain minimum called *niṣāb*. A pillar of Islam. Rate of payment varies according to the kind of possession. Details to be found in Fiqh books. Way of distribution may also be found in the (Qur'an 9: 60).

Transliteration Chart

أ	a
آ . ى	ā
ب	b
ت	t
ة	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ

ظ	dh
ع	ʿ
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
هـ - ه - ـه	h
و	w
و (as vowel)	ū or oo
ي	y
ي (as vowel)	ī or ee
ء	ʾ (Omitted in initial position)

َ	Fatḥah	a
ِ	Kasrah	i
ُ	Ḍammah	u
ّ	Shaddah	Double letter
ْ	Sukūn	Absence of vowel

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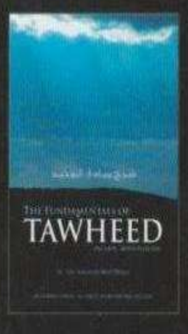
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Index of Hadiths

* In the footnote.

* See it in the footnote.



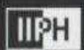
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